R E P O R T R E S U M E S

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FRESHMAN ENGLISH AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, BUFFALO.

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MODERN LANGUAGE ASSN. OF AMERICA, NEW YORK, N.Y.

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FOR A REPORT ON COLLEGE PROGRAMS IN FRESHMAN COMPOSITION THE ASSOCIATION OF DEPARTMENTS OF ENGLISH OBTAINED SYLLABI AND COURSE DESCRIPTIONS FROM DIRECTORS OF FRESHMAN COMPOSITION IN 66 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES. AMONG THE DATA ASSEMBLED FOR THE FULL REPORT (AVAILABLE AS TE 500 190) IS THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FRESHMAN ENGLISH PROGRAM AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, BUFFALO, WHICH IS CONTAINED IN THIS DOCUMENT. THE FIRST SECTION DESCRIBES 18 DIFFERENT COURSES OFFERED TO FRESHMEN IN THE FALL OF 1968. THE SECOND SECTION CONTAINS 12 PROPOSALS SUBMITTED BY TEACHERS FOR A NEW TWO-SEMESTER FRESHMAN ENGLISH COURSE. THE MAJOR PORTION OF THE DOCUMENT CONSISTS OF A REPORT ON 15 DIFFERENT COURSES TAUGHT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE FALL SEMESTER, 1967-68. A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WENT ON IN THE CLASSROOM AND AN EVALUATION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE COURSE ARE GIVEN BY EACH TEACHER. ALSO A GENERAL SUMMARY OF THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF THESE COURSES IS PROVIDED. (BN)

ED020940

FRESHMAN ENGLISH AT THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, BUFFALO

The Association of Departments of English collected syllabi and course descriptions from directors of freshman composition at sixty-six American colleges and universities. A survey report based on this information, College Programs in Freshman Composition (1968) by Bonnie E. Nelson, is available through ERIC as TE 500 190.

Because many of the directors sent information which is not available to the public and which could not be included in the full report, some of these program descriptions are reproduced here in one of ten auxillary reports: See also:

TE 500 191	State University of New York at Buffalo
TE 500 192	University of Hawaii
TE 500 193	Antioch College, Baker University, Clark University, Elmira College, Emory University, Juniata College, University of Maryland, Swarthmore College, and Tulane University
TE 500 194	University of Tulsa, Columbia Basin College, and Western State College of Colorado
TE 500 195	Junior College of Albany, Amarillo College, Bakersfield Junior College, Beckley College, California Concordia College, Cazenovia College, Colby Community Junior College, Grand View College, Harcum Junior College, Jefferson Community College, Lakewood State Junior College, Miami-Dade Junior College, Monroe County Community College, and Portland Community College
TE 500 196	University of Kentucky, Ohio State University, Purdue University, and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale
TE 500 197	Augustana College, Central Washington State College, Clarke College, State College, at Framingham, Harding College, Emporia State Teachers College, and King's College
TE 500 198	Bob Jones, Duquesne, John Carroll, Kansas State, Marquette, Northern Illinois, Washington State, and Washington Universities, as well as the Universities of Alabama, Dayton, Minnesota (Duluth), and Mississippi
TE 500 199	South Dakota State, Southern Illinois (Edwardsville), Tufts, and Wake Forest Universities, as well as the Universities of North Carolina, Santa Clara, Southern Florida, and Southern California

TE 500 191

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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BONNIE E. NELSON, COMPILER
MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
1968

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DESCRIPTIONS OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH COURSES

State University of New York at Buffalo
Department of English
Annex A
Buffalo, New York 14214

May, 1967

To Entering Freshmen:

The Freshman English program of the State University of New York at Buffalo provides the entering student a number of courses from which to choose, according to his interests and talents. Although these courses vary considerably in content and emphasis, they all have the same central purpose, the development and exercise of the student's powers of articulation, especially in writing.

Since our entering class is so large, it is probably impossible to give every student his first choice in English; but we will try.

Please read the accompanying descriptions of freshman courses, and decide which ones you are most interested in. (You will note that some courses are planned for two semesters, others for only one. You will have an opportunity in the fall semester to choose your spring semester course; for the present, you need choose only your fall semester course.)

Please indicate below your first seven preferences. Among these seven, please include at least one of the following: A101, B101, C101.

Fall Semester

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Your Name

_____

Address

_____

PLEASE BRING THIS SHEET WITH YOU TO YOUR SUMMER PLANNING CONFERENCE AND TURN IT IN AT THE REGISTRATION DESK. If you have any questions about any of this, please take them up with your advisor during your Summer Planning Conference.

Sincerely yours,

Taylor Stoehr

Taylor Stoehr
Director of Freshman English

TS:lk

A101-A102 Analytic Writing (2 semesters)

The operating assumptions of this course include:

The course is to be concerned with writing, not with a survey of English and/or American literature.

Writing is dividable into three main components--(a) reading, (b) thinking, and (c) writing per se. The creative writer can if he chooses largely avoid component (a). The college student cannot.

Expository prose should be read and analyzed before creative prose (fiction) is tackled. Poetry should be read and analyzed after creative prose.

Revision is as important a part of learning to write as is writing per se.

Quantity is irrelevant. Only quality matters.

The texts will be Locke, Gibson and Arms, Toward Liberal Education (first semester), and Introduction to Literature (second semester).

B101-102 Reading and Writing (2 semesters)

The proposal of this course is that reading and writing relate intimately to the condition of words in the world at any given time and place. Materials used will be ranging in nature, and will include modes of visual and sound material (e.g., radio, television, film) as well as written. The conduct of the course will be in the nature of a "workshop" in so far as the conduct and experience of the class will determine particular modes of procedure used. Although some attention will no doubt be given to the historical situation of texts, the course is not primarily involved with literary history, nor will it attempt to engage a specific tracking of the "history of ideas." Rather, it will try to emphasize modes of language in various formal situations (e.g., poems, stories, conversation) in order to gain some sense of the rapport between such modes and the specific environments in which they occur. In this respect, some attention will be given to the nature of language itself.

Possible texts include Edward Sapir, Language; Leroi Jones (ed.), The Moderns; Donald Allen (ed.), New American Poetry--as well as literature from earlier periods.

C101-C102 Writing about Experience (2 semesters)

This course will begin with its students' interests, and these will form its subject matter throughout. There will be no formal papers, no texts, no exams. Each student will be asked to keep a journal in which he records and comments on those aspects of his own experience, present or past, which interest him enough to put into words. In particular, he will be encouraged to describe dramatic encounters that he observes or participates in. The leading questions will be, what do you see, and by what means do you convey your experience to a reader. These questions will be pressed in classroom discussions of mimeographed excerpts from the journals, in order to illuminate the various ways in which the mind uses language to shape the world it knows. As soon as individual students appear to have located their central interests, there will be opportunities to attempt more lengthy and ambitious renderings of experience under the special direction of the instructor. Ultimately each student should have a chance to produce one long-considered and weighty piece of writing, good enough and close enough to his own concerns to justify a year's commitment of his time and energies.

D101-D102 Words and Thought (2 semesters)

This course is designed to give the student the tools he will need in developing any worthwhile style. These tools include clear thinking, the ability to back up opinion and statement with concrete evidence and argument, the ability to recognize mature and informed judgment, and an appreciation of the power of words and sentences and thoughts.

The reading of the course will consist of short prose selections. These will include readings from a basic text, plus various articles, student work, etc., chosen on the basis of its interest and timeliness. Although we may occasionally read novels, stories, plays, or poems, we emphasize that the course is not meant to be an introduction to literature or a survey of literary forms.

D101-D102 (con't)

In-class work will consist of discussion and argument of the issues raised in the reading material.

Writing assignments will vary. Several assignments may be related to the topic of class discussion, but such relation is not required. We believe that it doesn't really matter what the student is writing about as long as he is genuinely interested in his subject. We therefore feel that it is imperative to offer the student the widest possible choice in subject matter.

We are looking for students who enjoy talking and arguing about serious subjects--who are willing to support their opinions and beliefs in active discussion, even when those beliefs are questioned by the other members of the class.

E101-E102 The Personal Idiom and the Response to Literature (2 semesters)

This is an introductory English course neither more enjoyable nor more tedious than the one you have always imagined. The first semester should be terribly predictable: the syllabus includes units focusing on rhetoric, logic, and semantics. Hopefully, the formal elements will be only a basis for your developing an idiom or a voice which is uniquely personal. You might consider the ten papers formal digressions on topics suggested by the reading and class discussion. Our rage for order is expected to disintegrate by January, and the focus during the second semester will shift to fictional genres, poetry and drama.

F101-F102 Style and Structure (may be taken 1 or 2 semesters)

The purpose of this course will be to develop a mastery of both the critical analysis of literature and writing skills. Using various literary forms (mainly novels, plays, etc.), we will attempt to develop an awareness of different techniques and their relation to the students' own productions. The type and scope of the materials used will depend in some measure upon the students' abilities and interests. Both the readings and student papers will form the basis of class discussions.

A basic premise will be that the student can best expand and develop his own writing skills through an awareness of technical and stylistic methods used by writers of some stature. We will study specific creative media from the point-of-view of style and structure and will attempt to have the student try his hand at different creative and expository methods.

During the semester students will be expected to develop increased mastery and complexity in their writing, perhaps culminating in an attempt at some longer work. Panel discussions may be set up to discuss specific problems and difficulties in writing and reading.

G101-G102 Modern Culture (2 semesters)

Students will keep a journal about themselves and their experiences. There will be a maximum of two formal papers each semester, and those will be short. Work which is interesting will be mimeographed and discussed in class, and will form the main "text." Students will be invited to consider themselves in relation to themselves, each other, the university and the world. Additional material will come from Allen Ginsberg, Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller, Ramparts magazine, whatever movies happen to be on show, some Kafka short stories, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Within this framework, each student will be free to develop his own style and interest.

H101-H102 Literature and Composition (2 semesters)

This course is designed to acquaint the student with the various forms of literary composition, and to help him develop his own compositional abilities. In the first semester four or five poets will be chosen for intensive study. These might include, for example, Donne, Pope, Keats, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Williams, etc. The second semester will be directed towards a study of the novel, the short story, and the drama. An effort will be made to orient this part of the course around some central problem. For example, the course might

H101-H102 (con't)
consider how various modern writers treat the problem of the absurdity of modern life, and the works to be studied might include the plays of Albee, the novels of Genet, the stories of Kafka.

The course will work toward the development of patterns of method and approach that will enable the student to understand and elucidate the works considered. Students will be asked to write four or five papers each semester which describe these patterns and show how they enhance the understanding of a particular piece of literature. It is also hoped that the student will maintain a notebook that presents his experience with the classroom situation, with the ways in which the material is presented and discussed. The papers and notebooks will be reviewed by the instructor in an effort to make the student aware of more effective methods which might be employed in the presentation of his ideas.

J101-J102 Poetry (2 semesters)

This course will have two main purposes: (1) to introduce students to the problems involved in the close reading of carefully and sparingly selected poems; (2) to introduce students to the problems involved in writing well-organized, carefully polished, short essays. The subjects for the essays will be derived from the poetry. Increased freedom with regard to the reading and to the paper topics will be given the student as his progress merits it. We hope to cover with some thoroughness certain basic matters involved in the understanding and enjoyment of poetry at a reasonable level of sophistication, and thereby furnish a valuable preparation for students who plan to continue the study of literature at a higher level. The course is in no way closed, however, to students without such plans. It is hoped that the instruction offered in constructing an essay will be equally beneficial to any student who desires the skill to write properly.

K101-K102 Finding an Individual Voice (2 semesters)

This course will move away from many of the ideas and methods which the traditional approach to composition and literature usually imposes. We are not interested, for example, in the abstract notion of style--something we feel to be too rigid and mechanical, something which can lead to dead prose and standardized thought; rather we are searching for a number of styles which will reflect accurately and faithfully each one of our minds. As a start, we will undertake a critical examination of the various media which shape so many of our responses to "life": T.V., radio, film, newspapers, magazines. As the need arises, we will also work with fiction, drama, and poetry. But the goal will always be to find and develop our own individual voices. We want to create our own environment rather than respond to one that has been created for us. Class discussions will help us toward these goals, but more important will be the written assignments, which will include both journals and formal papers. There will be no announced text, since the class itself will serve as our subject matter; from time to time, however, we may turn to books for special purposes--like Ellison's Invisible Man, Mailer's Advertisements for Myself, Goodman's Growing Up Absurd, and McLuhan's Understanding Media. Class discussion will be on an informal basis and written work will be handed back with extensive comments instead of grades.

L101-L102 Critical Writing (2 semesters)

The principles which underlie this course are that reading should be regarded not only as a source of pleasure, but also as still the best way to understand another's thoughts, and that writing should serve as the means of conveying these thoughts. This is not to deny the importance of style or any type of "artistic" writing; we only wish to emphasize that the type of writing to be attempted in this course will be primarily critical. No one will be asked to write letters, journals, etc etc. We shall be interested in your responses to other writers and your ability to communicate these responses.

L101-L102 (con't)

The course is planned for a full year. Since the course is based upon your reactions to literature and your ability to communicate those reactions, a rather "meaty" anthology, The Essential Prose,edited by Dorothy Van Ghent and Willard Maas, will be used during the first semester. (This anthology contains a variety of fiction and narrative as well as essays.) This will perhaps be supplemented by other sources, including some modern fiction. The sections of the course will vary slightly, depending on the instructor, but in all the emphasis will be on an examination of man's problems of communicating with himself and others. We shall perhaps set up a "team teaching" situation in which you will be exposed to instructors other than your own and their methods of communication.

The second semester will follow more or less the same philosophy, but will concentrate more on fiction. The advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of fictional forms (poems, novels, stories, etc.) for the communication of ideas, feeling, situation, etc. will be discussed. (Why, for example, does one writer choose prose as his medium while another chooses poetry?) Among possible materials are the works of people like Barth, Mailer, and the Black Mountain poets, as well as those of more traditional writers. We shall spend some time during the first semester deciding on these materials. In addition to the critical papers already described, there may be a longer study assigned sometime in May

M101-M102 Creative Writing (May be taken 1 or 2 semesters)

This course, which may last one or two semesters, has a dual purpose. The first and primary aim is to create, or at least attempt to create literature--prose, poetry, or both. The second aim of the course is simply a ramification of the foregoing: to better understand what literature is by making it.

We may read several pieces of very current literature to see how other people are writing now. Stylistic examples can provide us with the points of departure often necessary for the young writer, until he or she finds a poetic or prose voice that is uniquely his or her own.

Pieces will be handed in on a weekly basis throughout the semester. The instructor will determine the total output relevant to the needs of each student's particular situation as a writer. Be assured, however, that the instructor will demand constant and intense attention to the work of creative writing, so that the potential writer will not be able to cheat himself through his own negligence or lack of self-discipline. Much will be required, but the unique dividends to be gained more than make up for a heavy burden of production.

N101-N102 Scientific Writing (2 semesters)

The primary method of this two-semester course will be to work with students directly within a scientific frame of reference. First-semester writing will be based on demonstrations, field trips, laboratory procedures, etc. In addition to helping the student develop a powerful prose style within the area of his interests, such exercises should also help him to evaluate his ability to interpret what he sees. This will lead to an exploration and use of secondary sources such as scientific journals, with the concomitant evaluation of their importance to the serious investigator. The amount of writing will depend largely upon the level of achievement of the individual student; those with a poor command of skills may expect to submit frequent written work until improvement is shown, while the student with well developed writing techniques will work on less frequent but more involved assignments.

Besides this practical goal, it is hoped to have the student develop an interest in books by modern scientists about their own and related fields. Suggested readings: Jacob Bronowski, Joseph Wood Krutch, Giorgio Santillana, C. P. Snow, George Gamov, Isaac Asimov and others. Both fictional and non-fictional work will be read.

The purpose of the course is to allow the scientifically oriented student to grow into broader interests as a corollary to his basic interests.

P101-P102 Experiments in Writing (May be taken 1 or 2 semesters)

You can't teach it, but in our course we intend to leave the way open to disrespect for the king's english and for the king. And respect for your own english and yourself as king. To do this we must explode the classroom situation. The standard "teacher knows-student accepts" basis will be alleviated. Each person will, we hope, use the occasion of the classroom, to attempt to define his own experience.

Our texts will include the electric literature of rock 'n 'roll, impromptu development of play (writing, acting and jumping around), journal keeping, and any books that make themselves present.

The only pre-requisite is a feeling of responsibility for your own actions.

Q101-Q102 Connections and Possibilities (may be taken for 1 or 2 semesters)

"'Creativity' is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the 'many' which it unifies. Thus 'creativity' introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The 'creative advance' is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates."

--Alfred North Whitehead

End result of this course is to teach both student and teacher to SEE. By SEEING, one has only to be responsive to what one's senses and intellect find to be inherently true about the self within a given environment. This places much of the burden on the student (1) in his writing (expository, creative, journalistic), (2) in his reading (suggestive bibliography), and (3) in his reaction to the loss of the outmoded and authoritarian student-teacher precept. A fourth way in teaching the act of SEEING is to liberally use every type of media and examine its effect upon the audience as participant--audio: tapes, recordings, live music, poetry readings; visual: films, studio art (fieldtrips). The process of the course then will be directed toward subverting the students' dependence on external authority and turning them in upon themselves.

R101-R102 The New American Poetry (2 semesters)

This full year course will trace the development of poetry from Whitman to the present day, and will concentrate upon the works of Eliot, Pound, W. C. Williams, Charles Olson, R. Creeley, R. Duncan, Allen Ginsberg and more recent poets. During the first semester, students will be expected to write critical papers. Once a familiarity with modern poetry has been gained, and the necessary historical background established, open discussions on poetry will begin. In the second semester the emphasis will shift to the writing of poetry, and its relationship to politics, philosophy, alchemy, dance music, and the visual arts. Critical papers may be substituted by those students who show no inclination toward the writing of poetry. Basic reading will include: Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot, A.B.C. of Reading by Ezra Pound, Selected Writings of Charles Olson, The New American Poetry edited by Don Allen, and Allen Ginsberg's Howl and Wichita Vortex Sutra.

S101-S102 Experience and Environment (2 semesters)

This course will proceed on the assumption that literature most emphatically does not exist in a vacuum. That is, there ought to be some correlation between what a student reads and his own life experience. It is not necessary to torture either the literature or the student to expose this relationship. The student's response-reaction to the literature should and will determine to a large degree the direction and content of the course.

The student will focus on the nature and extent of the above relationship in his writing, which will, it is hoped, concurrently enable him to discover a voice uniquely his own. Some of the writing will be in the form of journals, some in the traditional essay form, some creative, but all will be aimed at exploring the connections between himself and what he reads. The types of writing finally, will vary with the interests and abilities of the individual.

S101-S102 (con't)

The basic texts for the first semester will be The Essential Prose, edited by Van Ghent and Maas, a poetry anthology, and a specifically modern novel such as One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Catch 22, V, or The Invisible Man. The choice will be democratic.

T101-T102 Childhood (1st semester) and Science Fiction (2nd semester)

On the premise that literature is exciting, the first semester of this course is designed to take a close look at literature, using as filter the one broad area of experience common to all of us: childhood. By reading books about this "golden age" (specifically, Carroll, The Annotated Alice; Twain, Huckleberry Finn; Golding, Lord of the Flies; Tolstoy, Childhood, Boyhood, Youth; Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man), we should be able to discover something not only about literature, but about the way we see and understand the past, about the changes we are going through now, about what makes us tick. The papers will be designed to further our understanding of all these things.

The second semester of this course is mainly aimed at science fiction enthusiasts, but all interested parties are welcome. The texts will include Theodore Sturgeon, Ray Bradbury, Cyril Kornbluth, plus a selection of your own favorites. The papers will focus on the literary quality of the reading, and on man's place in the universe, variously understood.

Freshman English Review Vol. 1, No. 20

April 1967

Herewith are copies of the proposals made and accepted for new Freshman English courses. Some of them, in the process of review by the Freshman Curriculum committee, were somewhat revised; these copies are the originals, not revisions. They are not the descriptions we will be presenting the freshmen, although they are the basis for them. There have also been shifts of personnel, some collaborators having been enticed away from one group into another. A few groups are still understaffed, and will not be finally approved until at least three teachers agree to combine. Fully staffed groups may continue to add adherents; additions and changes should be reported to Mr. Stoehr.

Supervised Teaching on Monday at 5 in Annex B will discuss these proposals.

TS:lk

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Alice Levine
John Wilkinson

The Funny: A Modest Proposal

The basic purpose of this course is (at least) dual:

1. To get students writing

2. to get them reading

I have chosen "the funny" as a center because I think that it is a way to get at the students; once something strikes them as funny, and the teacher is on the same side of the laughter, they are involved.

The stress of the course will be on the development of what I hate to call "communication skills." We will be writing scenarios, scenes (for movies and plays; very different things), short stories (perhaps), essays, poetry, parody sketches, songs--even ads. Everything will, of course, be intended to be funny. Along with writing, we will be reading or seeing examples of successes in the genres. Carolyn Wells' Anthology of Nonsense Verse will provide examples of funny verse; Thurber, Perelman and Leacock will show what can be done with the essay, material from Plaza Nine or Upstairs at the Downstairs (perhaps available via flattery of Julius Monk) will serve as examples of sketches, and so on.

We will start the course by seeing a movie--maybe The Big Store or A Day at the Races. We will then, I hope, come to some agreement about techniques which produce humorous effects, and an understanding of the differences between verbal and visual humor, the dependence of humor upon immediacy, and why, sometimes, "you had to be there."

Once this groundwork is done we will be ready to start writing. One possible goal of the course and class is the publishing of a humor magazine--an issue good enough to start a regular humor magazine on campus.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

George F. Butterick
Robert L. Hogg

Reading and Writing--A Variation (Modern Poetry)

It has been my experience, both as a teacher and as an undergraduate major in creative writing, that young students who are keen on writing poetry have little or no familiarity with contemporary poetry, and even less of an idea how and why this new writing differs from what was written before. If there are a sufficient number of freshman students interested then, I would like to propose a course tracing the development of poetry from the end of the 19th Century to the present day, with particular emphasis on Eliot, Pound, W. C. Williams, and the Black Mountain poets. The students will be expected to attend readings of contemporary poets either in residence or brought to Buffalo for that purpose.

At present I conceive of the course in two parts: we will concentrate on the historical development of the "language of modern poetry" in the fall semester, at which time the emphasis will be on reading poetry and writing critical papers. Once a familiarity with modern poetry has been gained and the necessary historical background established, open discussions on poetry will begin.

The first part of the spring semester will consist of widespread reading and discussion of poetry written since 1950, but with the emphasis upon "the possibilities of language in poetry today." Lectures and discussion will move more toward theory, while the students will be expected to to the "practicing" themselves--either in poetry, or some combination of short-story, narrative essay or journal assignments. Critical papers may be substituted, however, by those students who in the previous semester showed unusual adroitness in this form and have no inclination toward creative writing themselves.

Benjamin Lee Whorf's Language, Thought and Reality will be a major text toward the theoretical background. Other possibilities include: Ernest Fenellosa's The Chinese Written Character; Sapir's Language.

During the first semester, private conferences with students will be held at their request; during the second semester, however, each student will be required to meet with the instructor at least once to discuss either finished work or work in progress.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Nancy C. Willingham
Francine Freedman
Atalissa Gilfoyle
John W. Cullen, Jr.
Lloyd Becker

Nicholas Pease
David Watson
Jean Creighton
Joan Clatworthy

Basic Suppositions (Concerning the nature of the course, the nature of freshman, the nature of the instructor, and whether pigs have wings)

1. That writing is a means of communication, rather than an end in and of itself, a means which is dependent upon both form and content.

2. That the average seventeen or eighteen year old has neither the breadth nor depth of life experience to be asked to supply the course content in its entirety. Exposure to new things, new ideas, and new people, with subsequent evaluation of this exposure in terms of their, hopefully, expanding perspective, seems a more valid cornerstone for a "liberal education."

3. That since the course must therefore supply its own content, the instructor of English should rely on the material most readily available to him, ie. literature.

4. That the learning of writing technique is greatly facilitated by exposure to good writing of various sorts. This gives the student a norm against wh ch he can compare his own efforts.

The Course (Based on the assumption that the students will remain the entire academic year, and the hope that classes will be small)

First Semester Text - Van Ghent: Essential Prose (in the abridged paperback form for the students' convenience)

This semester will concentrate on extensive writing of all sorts and on open class discussion. The purpose of using a text is, of course, to supply initial material for papers and discussion, as well as to present the students with examples of responsible, technically respectable writing. The individual instructor will be free to give final structure to the course, using as much or as little of the text as he pleases.

Any number of variations on the basic theme are possible. Perhaps, for the sake of manageability, the class could be split in half - some meeting one day, the rest the next, the entire class together the last meeting of the week. The instructor may wish to examine current treatments of the problems and ideas presented in the text, or to open the class to consideration of the students' immediate interests, for example, the psychedelic experience.

It is to be hoped that the course will direct the student to an examination of both himself and the world as they relate to one another.

Papers: six to ten, at the instructor's discretion.

Second Semester Texts - whatever novel(s), poems, short stories, or plays the instructor wishes to use; perhaps some basic critical collections such as Eliot, On Poetry and Poets, or Forester, Aspects of the Novel, or some similar collections.

Nancy C. Willingham
Francine Freedman
Atalissa Gilfoyle
John W. Cullen, Jr.
Lloyd Becker

Nicholas Pease
David Watson
Jean Creighton
Joan Clatworthy

Second Semester (con't.)

The emphasis this term will be placed upon genre studies and the writing of a few critical papers. The advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of the various genres for the communication of some idea, feeling, character, situation, what-have-you, will be considered. Why, for example, does one writer choose prose, while another chooses verse? Why does one writer use several different forms?

Along with the study of style and form, of course, the discussion of man and his experiences begun in the first semester will continue, with emphasis upon the literary treatment of such problems.

The student will be expected to write two or three critical papers during the term. Rather than have him blindly attempt such a paper alone, however, the instructor will be expected to work through several drafts with the student until his first paper reaches a respectable form. The final paper will be written entirely by the student.

Both Terms

Examinations: Preferably no class exams at all and no final. A departmental interrogation of the current sort would be folly.

Grading: on the traditional A to F basis for the final grade, although not necessarily for each individual paper.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

O. P. Jones
James Miller
Courtney Walsh

The aim of our course is to enlarge the freshman's ability to respond to life through language. We mean certain parts of life (those aspects of reality--social and political--which are immediately relevent to college freshmen) and certain kinds of language (the written and spoken word). Creative response presupposes some valid center of self, some patterns of thought and feeling, some capacity to express. It has been our experience that for most freshmen this center, pattern, and capacity is far too diffuse. One of the most important reasons for this, we think, is public language expressed through mass media. Our course, then, would revolve around an examination of the given forms of language with which we are confronted and an analysis of the impact of this language upon our own thought processes. One of our basic premises is that public language--the language of politics and the mass media--is often clichéed language. And the question is: how and when does individual expression arise out of forms of language which often disguise or suppress reality?

The course will begin--although not necessarily end--with analysis and discussion of political rhetoric (George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language" and some of his other essays will be particularly valuable here). Subject matter for this aspect of the course could range from WYSL's "Talk of Buffalo" to Donald Jackson's telephonic appeal "Let Freedom Ring" to the pages of Buffalo's two leading newspapers, The Spectrum and The Buffalo Evening News. Hopefully, such discussion will lead not only to reflection upon political cliches but towards consideration of the cliches through which we often express our existence.

The ultimate purpose of the course is not to become a forum for social and political issues--although such discussion will inevitably play a role in the structure of the class. But through an exploration of this public language, perhaps a private voice will emerge--a reflective voice, one which is less concerned with public modes of speech, formalized patterns of rhetoric, and more concerned with discovering a style which reflects the mind faithfully and accurately.

While the student himself will provide the content of the course, we will use a variety of texts--not necessarily for their literary value, but as a means of stimulating class discussion and reflection. Possible titles include: A Collection of Essays by George Orwell; Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man and Shadow And Act; Marshall McCluhan, Understanding Media; Norman Mailer, Advertisements For Myself; Goodman, Growing Up Absurd; Lippman, The Public Philosophy--but this list is not definitive.

In order to encourage the free dissemination of ideas, active class discussion we feel that the traditional teacher-student roles should be erased, or at least blurred. We want to enable the freshman to grow in thought and feeling; foster his individuality without molding him. He should learn how to think and feel without learning what to think and feel. He should encounter such a variety of experiences and occasions for articulating these experiences (these, in themselves, are further creative experiences) that his capacity for generating experience is multiplied.

This would be a one year course.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Karen Graham
Margery Stein
Irene Tillis

The purpose of this course will be to develop a technical, as well as an aesthetic, mastery of writing skills. Using various literary forms (novels, plays, etc.), we will attempt to develop an awareness of different techniques and their relation to the students' own production (the type and scope will depend upon the interest and ability of the students). Both the readings and the students' papers will form the basis of class discussions. The papers themselves will, hopefully, enable the students to find and develop the most satisfactory means of self-expression.

Specifically, I believe that the student can best expand and develop his own writing skills through an awareness of technical and stylistic methods used by writers of some stature. We will study specific creative mediums from the point of view of style and structure and attempt to have the student try his hand at different creative and expository methods. Students will probably write one out-of-class theme a week, using their own ideas and imagination in approaching writing from different points of view. Stress will be placed on originality, spontaneity, creativity and some freedom of choice. Their papers will be discussed in detail in class, and a grade of satisfactory or unsatisfactory will be given. Possible works, to aid them in their awareness of creative variety, might be Conrad's Nostromo, Faulkner's Sound and the Fury, Ford's The Good Soldier, Fitzgerald's Gatsby--in addition to short stories (perhaps some James) and essays on the nature of writing i.e. Barzun's Now to Write and Be Read. Students will be expected to devel op, as the year progresses, increased mastery and complexity in their writing, perhaps culminating in an attempt at a short story. Panel discussions may be set up to discuss specific problems and difficulties in writing. The course would probably be on a year basis, beginning with the easier and progressing to the more difficult types of writing.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Robert Nicholson
Walter Gern
Charles Tampio

Karen Johnson
Robert Hirsh

Experience and Environment

This course assumes that the goal of teaching (and learning) is the heightening of the student's awareness of himself and his environment. It assumes also that the aesthetic experience of literature contributes to this "end." The first semester deals with the personal and individual reactions and feelings about the student's environment - past and present. Its aim is further the student's perception of his particular environment and history. The second semester will attempt to transfer this awareness to the larger 'social' environment - especially in terms of the contemporary scene. It will deal with problems such as the "race" question, war, urban versus suburban, etc. The emphasis will be, however, on seeing these "problems," not as abstract sociological studies but rather as an extension of per onal confrontation with experience - from the bottom up rather than from the top down. It will, therefore, also be concerned with the possibility of action within the environment.

Materials: First semester: The Essential Prose, edited by Dorothy Van Ghent and Willard Maas plus a poetry anthology. Second semester: The Borzoi College Reader plus one or two novels in the modern, "hip," contemporary tradition ie. Catch 22, Mailer's American Dream, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. Aside from the two large books, the supplementary material will be chosen by each instructor based on the partccular interests and preoccupations of his class.

Method and assignments: Though instructors will meet weekly, each will teach according to his and the class' preference. Theemphasis is on freedom of teaching and learning 'methods.' Though certain types of assignments and class 'happenings' will be employed, the definite times of these will vary from class to class. Projected are: journal writing and discussion of same, possible field trips, pertinent films, and free sessions (sessions in which the students will bring in their particular interests: folk singing, records, articles, newspapers, etc.).

All types of writing assignments (journal, essay, creative) will be included; their use will be determined by each students progress, interests, and ability.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Daniel F. Connell
James E. Hart
Jeffrey D. Nesin
Daniel J. Zimmerman

Connections and Possibilities

"'Creativity' is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the 'many' which it unifies. Thus 'creativity' introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The 'creative advance' is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates."

Alfred North Whitehead

We want to produce and direct a course which 1) effectively obliterates the proscenium arch effect in the classroom, 2) breaks down the barriers between the classroom situation and the life situation, and 3) extends creativity into both areas. We wish to subvert the students' dependence on external authority and approbation and turn them in upon themselves for the means and ends of the course. The purpose of the course is therefore to provoke an organic/creative view of and participation in life. In order to accomplish this we will seek to break down their normal pattern of connection by confusing the usual student-teacher roles and by periodically exchanging roles.

Student-teacher projects: Writing (e.g. expository, creative, journalistic) in which all participate including teachers, and discussion, both in and out of class, proportions depending upon the organic situation/event; team teaching; rotation teaching; individual conferences; field trips.

Material: Bibliographies (suggestive only), films, tapes, music, readings, studio art, live performance, guests, and whatever else presents itself. We will examine various media as to their effects on the audience as participant.

Necessities: All sections meet at 3 p.m.; rooms adjacent or within cooperating distance, one of which must be large enough to hold one hundred freely freaking persons; large room equipped for audio-visual aids; course lasting one semester and repeated during the second semester.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Jonathan P. Levine
Philip E. Bodrock
Stephen T. Lacey

Words and Things

Time

The course will run for a full year, with one provision--students shall be able to change from one teacher to another within the course. It would be beneficial for all sections to meet at the same time in order to allow teacher switching, joint classes, etc.

Statement of Basic Ideals

Our proposal is for a course in the relation of words to things; in order to pursue this relation we will study words as things and words as symbols of things. Although our ultimate goal is the "improvement" of student writing, we believe there are a number of more crucial and basic goals that ought to be pursued before writing itself; furthermore, we believe that if these goals are pursued for their own sake, writing will improve by itself. Therefore we propose to exercise our students in the hard work of analytic thinking and discursive reasoning. Subjects and particular matters for discussion are not important because all subjects are real and all subjects are interesting; what we all will strive to get our students to do is guage the importance of any given thought by examining all of its implications, consequences, and attributes. We do not believe that student writing is dishonest or insincere so much as it is simple-minded, dull, or simply inarticulate and ineloquent. In short, we intend to improve writing by making thought more rigorous.

The Course Itself

1. Reading: Most reading will consist of short prose selections. The basic text for the course will be Dorothy Van Ghent's The Essential Prose. We will also read articles and student work chosen on the basis of interest and timeliness. Although we may occasionally read novels, stories, plays, or poems, we emphasize that the course is not meant to be an introduction to literature or a survey of literary forms.
2. In Class Work: will consist of discussion and argument of the issues raised in the reading material. The teacher's function will be to direct the discussion in the most intelligent manner possible; to this end he will assume whatever role or position appears necessary or essential, e.g. Platonist, Aristotelian, Cartesian, Marxist, etc.
3. Writing: assignments will vary. Several assignments may be related to the topic of class discussion, but such relation is not required. The teacher is expected to assign whatever kind of writing he feels will benefit the student. To that end, he may assign topics to the class, allow the student to choose his own topic, or assign a different topic to each student. We believe that it doesn't really matter what the student is writing about as long as he is genuinely interested in his subject. We therefore feel that it is imperative to offer the student the widest possible choice in subject matter. As teachers, our response to the students' papers will vary according to the needs of the students. Our primary objective will be to help the student realize that his words have importance, meaning, that they convey thought, and that he must be conscious of his position as a creator and articulator of thought. To that end, he must realize that some words convey a particular thought better than others, for various possible reasons, and that he has a dual responsibility--to words and to thoughts.

Jonathan P. Levine
Philip E. Bodrock
Stephen T. Lacey

Summary

The wide variation allowed for in our proposal is a result of our firm belief that it is really impossible to "teach students how to write." The closest we feel that we can come to that ideal is to give the student the tools he will need in developing any worthwhile style. These tools include clear thinking, the ability to back up opinion and statement with concrete evidence and argument, the ability to recognize mature and informed judgement, and an appreciation of the power of words and sentences and thoughts.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

P. Richard West
David Fletcher

Since this course sounds so much like the one to be offered by Professor Stoehr, and since there are only two of us in the group, we may as well apply to join the autobiography course. However, we are turning in an account of our philosophy to prove that we do have one.

Most of our students seem to have had, in High School, English courses consisting of formal study of literature, with frequent papers, often "scholarly", and merciless grading. They have all been taught formal spelling and grammar, and most of them seem to have mastered the craft. Occasionally, however, we find a student who cannot spell or punctuate, and it is amazing how often that student will be the one with the liveliest eye and style. Those who write "properly" tend to write polite, well-organized and dead prose calculated to satisfy the demand of rhetoric books.

The situation is bad for two reasons. Firstly, it shows that formal training in writing skills does not really work. Writing should be fluent, idiosyncratic and personal. Where it is not, a teacher should suspect a failure of thinking, or a mechanical inbred respect for "what is correct". Secondly, it makes the future study of literature (if there is to be any at all) difficult, because you can only go so far with conventions that have been learned mechanically.

The students lack any ability or desire to watch their inner selves, to discover the feelings they have rather than those they ought to have. This is dangerous for education and for the world. It seems to have come about for several reasons. Teachers in High Schools are so overworked that they are reduced to using blanket criteria to satisfy the incessant demand for grades. And grades, with their pretentions towards being "the same for everyone" are in themselves a cause and an effect of standardization. Educators seem to have forgotten that the spoken language precedes the written, and that the skills of writing have to be learned in two stages: first, the making of marks on paper; and secondly, the mastering of the "literary dialect". The trouble is that the literary dialect, even for most literary people, is secondary. It has to be learned by rote. There is no rationale behind it and so we have from our students its debased vestige in journalese and pomposity. These students already know all about grammar; they use it all the time when they talk. What the schools try to teach is a dialect in which idiom is not just inappropriate at times, but wrong and vulgar.

We propose that for a start grades and everything associated with them be abolished. Attendance should be checked only because the teacher knows his students and feels their absence; and even then, habitual absence should only be taken as information about what the student is getting out of the class. The atmosphere of the class should be relaxed, and seating should be arranged to break up the traditional teacher-learner hierarchy.

In the teaching of writing the most obvious thing is that students should write about what seems most real to them, and that ought to be their own feelings and perceptions. We leave out thoughts because those things are most often not personal. The first work will be stilted and formal, but the job begins with that.

P. Richard West
David Fletcher

Spelling and grammar should be ignored, although later on they might be corrected with the clear rider that "it is being done because you might as well know about it". The teacher's written comments ought to consist of responses to what the student has said, and of questions calculated to make the student reflect. The teacher can point out what seems unclear and what he feels "does not work". But all along there should be the understanding that this is not correction. Instead, the teacher is leading the student along a road of discovery, not to say self-discovery.

The most interesting work will be duplicated and used as discussion material in class. Discussion will be wide-ranging and free, and will work together with the writing. Students will be encouraged to reflect on the difference between the written and the spoken language, and on many other things: the nature of the classroom situation; and their own thoughts and feelings about anything which interests them.

Basically, there is nothing and everything to be learned. We do not know much about teaching, but the emphasis seems to us to lie on learning. If the "basic aims" can be stated at all, they are: that the students should enjoy the course, and that English should be a class where, as one freshman put it, "you can be a human being", where students can assimilate all their experiences as one is supposed to sort out the day's experiences in dreams; that the students dhould feel free to say what they like, whatever comes first to mind; that they should learn to listen to their own inner voices, watching themselves in action and perception; that they should come to a conscious understanding of the activity of making marks on paper; that the loquacious should come to listen and the shy to speak.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Anthony Bradley
Arnold Cushner
Charles Martin

Paul Watsky
Anthony Boyle

We would like to present a course in literature and composition for Freshman English students. The first semester will be given over to poetry, the second to drama and fiction. In the poetry section, we will use individual texts for the four or five poets chosen, rather than any anthology. Our reasons are two: the first is to show the students that a poem's most natural context is in the body of the poet's work, rather than in anyone's golden treasury. The second is to give the student a good understanding of a small number of important poets, rather than a misunderstanding of many (a la "Sound and Sense").

During the semester, the students will maintain critical notebooks, checked periodically by the instructor. They will also be responsible for a number of more formal papers, at the instructor's discretion. The notebooks will (we hope) insure a continuing, rather than sporadic, attention to the materials; the papers will be more directly related to the need for instructing the students in composition. The course will (again, at the teacher's discretion) include time devoted to the teaching of composition, with printed material, either published (Read's English Prose Style, for example) or dittoed (student papers) as texts to exemplify, positively or negatively, paragraph organization, choice of words, etc.

Final exam ought to be optional.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Richard Wheeler
D. Thomas Lynner

Sherwyn Carr
Richard Tow

Goal: to develop the abilities of freshmen in the writing of prose that is clear, lively, and personal, but not to do so at the grievous expense of correctness. It is our further intention to expose the classes to examples of great poetry and prose; the two tasks, we believe, readily mix, for sensitive reading and intelligent writing both have cultivated sensibility as a prerequisite.

Rational: Our concern then, is the pursuit of style. In the belief that before the execution of good style comes the appreciation of it, we will periodically present our classes with poems whose excellence of expression seems to us especially memorable. The primary object of these confrontations will be to understand the poet's or essayist's use of words, to attempt accounting for the success of the piece. The idea of the course is this: The appreciation of style is a necessary antecedent to the personal possession of it, and the first step toward both goals is made by the rigorous attention to the importance of individual words. We are not focusing on the essay as a form, but on prose style. Accordingly, we will assign shorter projects than is generally the practice now; as the year progresses--and hopefully the student--the projects will become longer and more demanding. It is the general belief that the writing of poetry and fiction is a creative and artistic concern, whereas the writing of discursive prose and accordingly the essay, is not. We believe that this distinction is an unfortunate one for prose, and that by treating prose with all the care accorded art, we may bring forth from the students a prose which is not dead. We may try looking at examples considered to be bad prose; they may come from the class itself but the stuff is to be found in all places, as you professors should know. A tipical poem which we are considering to begin the course with is Randall Jarrell's "Death of a ball-turret gunner". We cannot hope to educate ninety freshmen into ninety prose stylists with this or any system, but it is hoped that some encouraging results may be had after two semesters. It is impossible to say just how many projects will be thought ideal tt this time. The number will probably be between 8 and 12 a semester. We request that all three sections be scheduled at the same time, and, if possible, in reasonable proximity to each other. The importance of simultaneous meetings is great, for we hope to exchange students with each other on various occasions (e.g. if roughly a fourth of the students in the four groups desire some creative assignments, (poetry etc.), but the remaining students do not, it would be most convenient to rearrange the grouping temporarily). The four of us are teaching-fellows. We hope you will consider our request to be a group of four seriously.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Peter Anderson
Richard Moss
Stephen Whaley

The Personal Idiom and the Response to Literature

Year course: semester one, expository writing; semester two, introduction to literature.

Texts:

Semester one

The Borzoi College Reader, Muscatine and Griffith
Thinking Straight, Beardsley

Semester two

Oedipus Rex, Sophocles
Lear, Shakespeare
Waiting for Godot, Beckett
The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals, Nietzsche

The College Anthology of British and American Verse, Hiett & Park
The New American Poetry, Donald M. Allen

Short Story Masterpieces, Warren & Erskine
Tom Jones, Fielding
The Immoralist, Gide
Second Skin, Hawkes

Death in Venice and Other Stories, Mann (optional)
The Snows of Kilimanjaro and Other Stories, Hemingway (optional)

The purpose of this two-semester course in Freshman English is to develop the students' ability to write expository prose of all sorts and to respond to the various types of literature.

Our approach is, frankly, traditional. We believe the skills of writing must be taught as such; that is, the disciplines and possibilities afforded by rhetoric, logic, and the uses of language form the necessary groundwork for both creative expression and response to literature.

The organization of the two semesters stresses the development of writing skills as a necessary adjunct to the primary response to literature.

By grouping three individual classes into one structure of lectures and sections, the advantages of team-teaching and discussion groups are the economical distribution of introductory and coordinating perspectives with the close analysis of themes and works. The procedure below describes one unit of the six which comprise the first semester's work. The topics for the remaining units are listed separately as well as those of the second semester.

Peter Anderson
Richard Moss
Stephen Whaley

Unit One: Rhetoric (Definition and Assertion)

Meeting

1 Lecture: Definition and assertion in the process of inquiry.
Assignment: Borzoi, "What is America?" pp. 127-97.
THEME 1: "When I Say I Am a _____, What Do I Mean? An Essay in Definition"

2 Section Discussion of essays read and their relation to personal experience. (continues...)

3 Section

4 Section

5 Section

6. Section

7 Lecture: Review of the processes of definition and assertion found in the essays grouped as "What is America?"

Unit Two: Rhetoric (argumentation and proving)
Unit Three: Logic (Indeductive and deductive reasoning)
Unit Four: Logic (Organization)
Unit Five: Language (Semantics)
Unit Six: Language (Tone)

Semester Two

Unit One: Drama (Oedipus Rex, Lear, Waiting for Godot)
Unit Two: Drama (The Birth of Tragedy and the Genealogy of Morals)
Unit Three: Poetry (to 1950)
Unit Four: Poetry (Contemporary)
Unit Five: The Short Novel
Unit Six: The Novel

There will be ten papers each semester, one of which will be the final examination. Some of the lecture meetings will be devoted to the analysis of exemplary themes. In a similar way individual papers will become the basis for section discussion.

Special requirements: that all sections meet at the same hours, preferably at 10, 11, or 12 o'clock. One classroom should be able to seat 50 people.

English 101-102 Course Proposal

Michael London
Lewis MacAdams
Hanford Woods

AIM: To teach the students and ourselves disrespect for the king's English (and the king) and a respect for their own English and themselves as king.

We intend to use and examine our own idiom. We do not at the outset intend to provide a syllabus since it will be the success of this course if the students supply the materials themselves. Some of the things this has taken us into this year has been popular music, play writing, journal keeping, etc. If the student becomes interested in and respecfful of his own idiom he is going to cease to regard the teacher's idiom as all important. This should lead the student to taking the classroom situation less seriously, to treat it as a game. We intend to examine the nature of games.

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AT BUFFALO

Report on Freshman English, Fall Semester 1967-1968

Last year the English Department decided to restructure the Freshman English program. In the spring semester groups of three or more graduate students proposed courses in composition which they would be willing to teach as staffs. No departmental guidelines were laid down for these courses beyond the requirement that they have as their rationale some formulated theory of how to teach and learn writing skills. In the reports which follow, fifteen different courses (D-T) represent those proposed and instituted by the graduate assistant staff. In addition three other courses were established, under the direction of Robert Creeley, Burton Raffel, and myself; and approximately fifteen staff members, mostly new graduate students, were assigned to each of these "directed" courses.

Permission was obtained to give only "pass" and "fail" grades in these new courses. Incompletes were abolished in order to insure that the work of the course--practice in writing--would be carried on steadily over a relatively long stretch of time, not all in a rush during a weekend of the second semester. Students were allowed to resign from the course without penalty if they missed too much work because of illness.

At the end of the first semester I asked members of the staff to report on the history and results of their courses. I asked for fairly circumstantial accounts of the courses, emphasizing turning points, successes and failures, and the working-out of original intentions; some sense of students' reactions to the course; evaluation of the pass/fail system; the effects (if any) of working together as a staff; and minority reports, should the groups turn out not to have followed common paths during the semester. It was mentioned that these reports would be circulated among the staff, the department faculty, and various university administrators.

In this prologue to the actual reports I will attempt to interpret their significance, as it appears in the light of impressions I have gathered from other sources. I should point out that in the cases of courses A and B I did not call for individual reports from all members of those staffs, but invited the directors, if they wished, to speak for their groups. I also hoped that most of the other groups would present staff reports, but apparently very few were able to maintain a common approach to the problems of their particular sections. In presenting these reports I have edited them very slightly, removing a few names of freshmen in cases where identification might be embarrassing to them, and deleting some supplementary materials, such as copies of assignments or exams, where they seemed unnecessary to the full picture.

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At first glance the reports seem rather discouraging. The failure of the groups to maintain their original cohesiveness suggests a lack of good faith in entering into combinations as staffs. Very few of the instructors seem to regard the collapse of their staffs as a very significant event in the history of the semester, whereas, had there been any serious commitment at the outset, some sense of loss or confusion would be expected. Not all disintegrated courses should be viewed as failures however. In some cases the splitting off may be interpreted as a sign of flexibility or resourcefulness in the face of unforeseen difficulties. The individual reports should be examined for indications of the success or failure of each instructor's enterprise, including his work as a staff member.

Another discouraging fact is how little writing was produced in some sections. Various justifications are offered for what seems to be a rather obvious negligence. For instance, it is argued that four carefully composed papers are worth twice as many hastily drafted ones. But neither four nor eight papers, labored over or scribbled at the last minute, will give the student enough practice to improve his writing. Whatever the excuses, there was a disheartening tendency to give up the attempt to teach writing, in favor of some other goal--for example, literary criticism, modern culture, Marcuse-ism, Brown-ism, or McLuhan-ism. Some instructors seem to have been at a loss to fill up class time in interesting ways without falling back on such topics, which probably have little direct application to the writing problems of the freshmen. Perhaps everyone thought he was <u>also</u> teaching writing, but to inscribe a few comments on each paper once a month is not to teach writing. Of course, there were other cases, where instructors assigned writing but the students refused to produce it; that is quite a different sort of problem (see the section on the results of the pass/fail system).

Some rumors have filtered through to me that instructors were frequently absent, particularly on Saturdays. I have no way of judging the extent of this dereliction, since all the complaints have been third or fourth hand. One source of these rumors may have been our chronic difficulties with the Maintenance staff in getting Annex B and the trailers unlocked for Saturday morning classes. Of course in such a large group as the Freshman English staff there will always be a number of unavoidable absences, most of which were handled either by substitutes or by official cancellation of the day's class. Also to be borne in mind is the way in which rumors begin and spread. It is probably true that there has been some failure to meet classes, along with laxness in other areas already mentioned; but equally certain is the tendency of a loosely structured program to give rise to rumors of general disorganization and sloppiness. Frankly I am much more worried about the collapse of the staff groups and about the paucity of writing than I am about a few missed classes and disappointed students. All of our mistakes are bad for morale and tend to subvert the program, but missed classes are symptomatic while other failings are central and organic.

Other complaints about the program have ranged from annoyances about the habits of dress and grooming of the instructors to righteous indignation at the discussions in class of various taboo topics--sex, obscenity, the war. Some students expressed the desire to be taught grammar. Others were upset by the sink-or-swim attitude of their instructors and wanted to be whipped into activity by more stringent assignments and a grading system. In general the students seem to have been bothered by any sort of unconventionalites. Their previous education has taught them to expect certain demands and not others; they have difficulty even recognizing an unfamiliar structure of responsibilities.

Prospects

These reports are remarkable in a number of ways. Overall they may seem to paint a discouraging picture (one wonders what sort of picture would emerge from an equally honest and full report of a more conventionally organized Freshman English program). But the striking fact is the length and detail of so many of these accounts. There is a kind of radical honesty, or at least bravado, implied in their fullness and circumstantiality. It is hard to escape the conclusion that some members of the staff have been deeply engaged in the problems of teaching Freshman English. Other indications lead to the same conclusion. More freshman papers have had wide circulation this year than in any other. At least one group of freshmen is beginning a literary magazine. In general there is an increased

interest and respect for freshman writing. Several hundred papers produced in various sections of the course have crossed my desk, many of them demonstrating, by their quality, that somebody was learning something. The number of complaints and suggestions (whatever their bias) also implies an increasing self-awareness among staff members about their teaching problems. I have only last year's experience to measure it against, but on that basis I would argue that the general ferment and unrest in this year's program must be interpreted as a good sign, just as encouraging as the high enthusiasm seen in some parts of the program, and likely to lead to serious re-thinking of the aims and methods of the course. Already in the second semester one can observe a trend toward experiment, fostered in part by the confrontation with failure which these reports make explicit. Wherever one locates the problem--in the course, in the students, in oneself as teacher--the awareness that there is a problem is the first step. The existence of so many different (and often contradictory) approaches helps one see alternatives, and a number of instructors are now trying out new methods borrowed from their colleagues. The prospect for next year's staff-groups is brightened somewhat by this sharing of techniques. In the long run the development of the program depends on the continued freedom to experiment and the continued inclination to report success or failure openly and fully. We will be able to learn from each other so long as we keep both of these possibilities alive.

The Pass/Fail System

There is division among both students and faculty on the issue of the pass/fail system. The majority of complaints were voiced by those instructors and students who are more or less traditionally oriented to Freshman English. They argued the need for some sort of prod to combat a general laxness in the course. Students wanted to know where they stood according to some univeral system of measurement. They also felt that a grade in Freshman English was necessary in order to represent fairly their freshman year (that is, a grade of B in English might offset a D in chemistry). Instructors feared that too many lazy or incompetent students could slip by with a Pass, whereas in a letter grade system they would get the Ds and Fs they deserve. They also pointed out that the lack of gradations in the system encouraged merely perfunctory performance--just enough to get by.

Instructors and students in courses that emphasized student initiative were the most vocal supporters of the pass/fail system. They reasoned that, in any case, accurate determination of ability in writing is not really possible beyond a crude pass/fail distinction. Writing is not like high-jumping, an effort to be measured by marks on a notched stick. The overstructuring of the course into objectively measureable units, so these arguments go on to say, would tend to shift the emphasis from writing skills to "information input."

As the reader of the following pages will see, most comments, pro or con, from both students and instructors, were highly tinged with emotion--and need interpretation. The actual effects of the pass/fail system probably boil down to a few tendencies, advantageous and disadvantageous:

Students tend to slack off in Freshman English, as opposed to their other courses, unless they happen to get the writing "bug"--and the susceptibility to this "bug" seems to depend on the teacher and his approach to the course rather than on the students.

Students upset by the lack of a familiar "educational" goal either search for a substitute goal or reconceive the course as "not important."

The criterion for reward and punishment shifts from "performance" to "effort," most failures resulting from laziness or bad faith.

Instructors are forced to confront the problem of getting the student to like writing, to participate actively in class, etc.; they are pushed toward longer and more detailed evaluative comments on papers, and more frequent conferences with students.

The statistics on the number of students passing or failing last semester as opposed to the preceding Fall show that there has been little change in the number of Fs. Last semester 56 students out of a total enrollment of 1990 failed the course. A year earlier the percentage was slightly higher, 59 students flunking, out of an enrollment of 1873.

A more important contrast is the following: a year ago 36 students were given incompletes in Freshman English, while 30 resigned from the course before completion. This year students who failed to complete the course (for whatever reason) totaled only 18. In other words last year there were more students unable to finish the course than there were failing it, and presumably the second semester was a heavy burden for those who had to make up incompletes.

A further interesting fact--bearing out the argument of those students who complained that the "loss" of the English grade brought down their cumulative averages--is the set of figures on letter-grades given last year. More students received B's than any other grade in the Fall of 1966. This fact would suggest that grading practices have been so generous that Freshman English is appropriately counted on by the students as a "gut" course. Perhaps this is as it should be. On the one hand it seems to me that writing is as important as chemistry or mathematics, and if a student does well in it he ought to get credit for his good performance--if his overall performance is being judged in a grading system. On the other hand, within that same credit system, it seems obvious that the student who thinks he can get an easy grade in Freshman English is less likely to work hard, and will put most of his effort in other courses. In other words, at least one complaint about the pass/fail system also applies to the letter-grade system, as it has been practiced here.

Although it does not emerge explicitly in these reports, there is probably a way to combat the difficulty so many instructors experienced in getting their students to work without the carrot-and-stick of letter-grades. Some teachers managed to extract more writing from their students than ordinarily produced; the obvious implication is that the pass/fail system can be an advantage as well as a disadvantage. Let me propose a theory of their successes: Since writing is essentially a solitary and personal affair, he classroom approach tends--at least in some ways--to subvert the aims of the course. Assignments set forth for a whole class--whether specific ("a paper on Friday") or general ("five pages a week")--cannot take account of the individual abilities and interests of particular students. Impersonal as letter-grades are, they have a certain intimate force. And without them, a student who needs "pressure" in order to work is unlikely to respond to generalized exhortation or admonition; it is too easy to "hide in the back of the room." The solution is to move, as quickly as possible, to individualized assignments directed at particular students (by comments on papers, or by conferences). Simply as a device for increasing student effort, this method has clear advantages. It puts a different, more authentic, pressure on the student--one that can be finely adjusted to his particular eagerness or recalcitrance. Furthermore, this sort of personal attention may often be inspiring in more than a quantitative way. The quality of the student's work can also get a lift from

such advice and encouragement. The blunter incentive of letter-grades is not likely to be as successful in motivating any extraordinary efforts from students, and probably less powerful even as a mere expedient, to keep the dull students hopping.

Millard Fillmore College

Included in the following reports are a number submitted by instructors in Millard Fillmore College. Since the Freshman English staff in the night school is composed of both teaching fellows and various non-university personnel (for example, teachers in local community colleges and high schools), and since the student population of Millard Fillmore College is differently constituted, the program there was organized as a separate enterprise. At the beginning of the semester students were divided into two categories--"slow" and "fast." This rough distinction, based on the students' first papers in class, was designed to reduce the range of talents in any one section, so that instructors would not have to address "two audiences." "Fast" students were taught by teaching fellows, "slow" students by the other instructors in the program. Although the instructors in the two groups were encouraged (by this division itself, among other things) to work together as staffs, there were no formal structures provided for this purpose. Most of the teachers operated on their own, though it is clear from the reports that the "fast" and "slow" groups tended to be recognizably different in approach. Not all Millard Fillmore instructors reported on their courses; although they were invited to do so, there was no pressure put on those who preferred to remain silent.

The special opportunities and difficulties of night-school teaching are fairly well represented in the reports. The division of students into "slow" and "fast" categories seems to have been useful, although we obviously made mistakes (some students turned out to be a lot better than their first papers suggested). The problem of organizing staffs was, as expected, even more difficult than in the day school. Left to their own devices, instructors preferred to work alone. Plans are under way to integrate Millard Fillmore Freshman English more fully into the day-school program next year, and an attempt will be made to organize staff groups, with a common approach and regular weekly staff meetings.

Taylor Stoehr
Director of Freshman English

A101-A102 Analytic Writing

The operating assumptions of this course include:
The course is to be concerned with writing, not with a survey of English and/or American literature.
Writing is dividable into three main components--(a) reading, (b) thinking and (c) writing per se. The creative writer can if he chooses largely avoid component (a). The college student cannot.
Expository prose should be read and analyzed before creative prose (fiction) is tackled. Poetry should be read and analyzed after creative prose.
Revision is as important a part of learning to write as is writing per se.
Quantity is irrelevant. Only quality matters.
The texts will be Locke, Gibson and Arms, Toward Liberal Education (first semester), and Introduction to Literature (second semester).

Group A — Director: Burton Raffel

Staff: Bale, Bouchard, Boyd, Flinn, Gerber, Kissam, Marchant, Patrick, Powers, Reisner, Twigg, Webb, D. Wilson.

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Group A — Director, Burton Raffel

There have been debits as well as credits; on the whole, I think the experiment has worked quite well, both from my point of view and (though I cannot of course speak with authority for the TA participants) from that of the TA's. For most of the semester we met once a week, usually for rather more than the scheduled two hours. At one point, I suggested meeting every two weeks, and was asked to postpone this cutback, since there remained unanswered problems the TA's wanted to discuss with me and with each other. At the end of the semester, when most major points had at least been broached, we did in fact move to biweekly meetings. Next semester, as you suggested, the group will decentralize itself, reconstituting in a number of smaller groups of three and four members.

The principal items for discussion tended to be (not necessarily in this order): ways to stimulate students; ways to most effectively grade papers; criteria for suitable teaching material; the purpose and definition of the course. A variety of experiments was attempted, some with more success than others. It turned out that having the TA's visit each other's classes, both "straight" (i.e., as TA's) and in disguise (assuming a variety of poses, usually keyed to the essays under discussion), worked a great deal better than having me visit their classes. Team teaching was attemped by several TA's, with I think considerable success; it could not be attempted by me, though I had hoped it could be. Both freshman students and the TA's themselves tended to be thrown out of phase by my being present: I conclude that senior people had in general better stay out of junior people's classrooms.

My own involvement, apart from conducting the weekly sessions, answering questions (and raising them), and the like, tended to concentrate on two areas: supervision of sets of papers as graded by the TA's, and instruction in linguistics. I read at least one set of papers by each TA in the group, and made detailed notes. Some sets of papers, and some individual papers extracted from sets, were discussed in the group. The instruction in linguistics -- which was never intended, last year, when I first thought out the group's set-up -- seemed absolutely essential. The TA's have an initial tendency to parrot out-dated "grammatical" terminology, which is both imperfectly understood by them and largely useless to the freshmen. They also have an initial tendency to believe in the logicality of language, and

other such nonsense.

Early on in the semester I had them report, orally, on the assignments they were making--both essays (and other material) assigned, and paper topics. This became unnecessary, once they had the feeling of things. I gradually loosened the reins, which were never very tight, as things went along; they quite naturally began to want them loosened, as they gained in confidence and experience. As you have seen for yourself, a certain esprit de corps developed: I think this group is very conscious of itself as a group, and has functioned with a considerable degree of group efficiency and cooperation. I had a good time -- a very good time. I think on the whole they did too.

B101-102 Reading and Writing

The proposal of this course is that reading and writing relate intimately to the condition of words in the world at any given time and place. Materials used will be ranging in nature, and will include modes of visual and sound material (e.g., radio, television, film) as well as written. The conduct of the course will be in the nature of a "workshop" in so far as the conduct and experience of the class will determine particular modes of procedure used. Although some attention will no doubt be given to the historical situation of texts, the course in not primarily involved with literary history, nor will it attempt to engage a specific tracking of the "history of ideas." Rather, it will try to emphasize modes of language in various formal situatuons (e.g., poems, stories, conversation) in order to gain some sense of the rapport between such modes and the specific environments in which they occur. In this respect, some attention will be given to the nature of language itself. Possible texts include Edward Sapir, Language; Leroi Jones (ed.), The Moderns; Donald Allen (ed.), New American Poetry--as well as literature from earlier periods.

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Group B — Director; Robert Creeley

Staff: Davis, Erick, Kass, Klinger, Lamb, Leary, King, Morris, Paulson, Roberts, Stark, Szabo, Vosburgh.

Group B *** Robert Creeley

What comments I can offer on the semester's work are necessarily in the nature of impressions, because I was particularly wary of any process that seemed implicitly to order the progress of teaching, either by means of 'evaluation' or otherwise directed inquiry. In that sense, then, I depended on meetings with the various graduate assistants involved (or otherwise arranged conversations) to keep me aware of what was happening, and I tried to keep these meetings a kind of 'pooling of resources' and an informal means of understanding what common problems we all were having and the ways possible for dealing with them.

One marked fact seems that many of the graduate assistants had first to find a vocabulary and address they could share with their students--quite often an unexpected difficulty for them, since many assumed that there would be a fairly wide agreement of interests. For example, one graduate assistant writes in summary (in a brief report I asked each to write): "I found the class very unsophisticated--having no observable experience in contemporary media; very fearful of articulating opinions (at first); a bit hostile to 'obscenity;' and very aloof vis-a-vis my 'hippiness.'" As it happens, his class had a number of student nurses in it, but I think this situation was frequently met with.

In this respect, the fact that these graduate students and their own students in turn share an 'age group,' so to speak, makes interesting use of the difference in attitudes met with. That is, both feel, I think, that only articulate statement and defense of opinion gives that opinion authority. Remembering that many of these freshman come from teaching situations in highschool where the opportunity for the active confrontation of ideas is limited, English 101 can actively stimulate such exchange and process of understanding in a highly useful manner. Apropos, one graduate assistant writes: "Instead of lectures or explication I used the student directed technique. Each class meeting five of

them were responsible to the class to lead the discussion along any lines they chose. This worked out rather well, although we usually strayed far afield into sociology, psychology, religion, etc. Then they became disgruntled when they discovered their instructor was not a guru with all the answers. For myself, I found that letting the student take the initiative makes more emotional rather than intellectual demands on the instructor."

What this young teacher qualifies here as "emotional" seems to me most interesting. Clearly, no class such as this can undertake to be a workshop in human relationships of this implied order, and yet I highly value such experience--particularly at the Freshman level. The point is that many of them indeed have to make the shift from a learning situation in which the purposes and means are clearly defined by the teacher, to one in which their own decisions and means of adaptation and evaluation are increasingly relevant. No doubt I am myself markedly idealistic in emphasizing this point, but English 101, nonetheless, is an excellent context for the possibility of this kind of decision.

Although some of the graduate assistants were not very satisfied with their situation, I do feel all of them became unequivocally involved, by which I mean that all of them seem to me markedly interested by their teaching. One, for example whom I know to have been very disgruntled at first at the fact his class met at 8:00, and was largely composed of student nurses, can say at this point, "Now that I've proven to myself that I have got something to say to freshmen, and don't have to be embarrassed about my 'role,' I hope to socialize a lot more next term with the class and foster more of a unity (even among them, to the exclusion of myself) than I did this term." What he speaks of as 'socializing,' I think, can be put as his wish to gain more distinct rapport with their fact, and by saying "to the exclusion of myself" would seem to indicate that he has learned one significant aspect of teaching.

Insofar as specific class reading, and/or content, was involved, the texts assigned to the group proved an understandable irritation, both to students and the graduate assistants in most cases. Again, however, I think this gave them often a common ground and stimulated some of them to devise their own texts with the help of their students. Consequently, next semester each graduate assistant will decide what texts and other materials will be used in his or her class. Since this group was not interested to make that decision initially, I feel it's of interest that they now are. It marks an increase of their decision and responsibility, and may also possibly show that texts not specifically decided upon by teacher and students in concert will provoke such disgruntlement in situations where an ostensible 'purpose' or 'goal' in the teaching is not primarily evident.

No doubt this lack of a 'goal' bothered many of the Freshmen themselves. I know that my class spent a good deal of time at the outset trying to get an answer out of me as to what I wss hoping to teach them. Their comments at the end of the semester were interesting in that many felt they had come to write more relaxedly and intensively, that they recognized a much greater diversity of attitudes and ideas than they had previously been able to consider, and that they were consequently more tolerant of judgements and feelings not their own. Such information is not easily categorized as a 'subject' but I would feel it invaluable to any course of college study that I'm aware of, and that it might be gained at the outset of one's college study seems very useful.

Thinking, then, of specific features of Englssh 101, the 'pass-fail' system seems to have provoked varied reaction but of a fairly expectable order. (I enclose a report from Nancy Vosburgh, which includes a collection of her students' opinion on this grading system, which I found most interesting.) Those students who depend on a clearly external and 'objective' report of their standing are frustrated by this device. They want to know 'where they are' and even the most extensive comments on their work do not really satisfy them. I understand their frustration, but I think the gradual shift to the qualification of their own experience of what is happening to them and how they are responding is much more to be valued. In like sense, those who, at the outset, assumed that this system would permit them to 'get by' with minimal evaluation and consequently pressure, were often made finally uneasy by this assumption and brought to qualify themselves in a way very like their opposites, so to speak. The comments

I received from my class at the semester's end would bear this out as well as the fact that the majority did do all that was asked of them and attendance was usually good. No one likes to do something for nothing,and if the usual goals of an A or B are shifted, then other goals in learning seem to gain ground in consequence. Habituation alone, happily or unhappily, will mean that the majority of Freshmen assume that a class is 'serious' and that their attendance is 'required' -- but many, I would feel, gained a sense of the seriousness of their own qualifications, when the method of an 'objective' evaluation of that experience was omitted. Such a course as English 101 is an ideal context for this kind of learning, although it will often create difficulties for student and teacher alike.

As one instance of such difficulties, here is a comment from a graduate instructor: "The structure of the pass-fail system seems totally detrimental. Freshmen have been in a grade-structured educational system for too long to expect them to adapt immediately. A mere "P' on a paper strikes those whose papers were mediocre as sufficient, and strikes those whose papers were good as indicating mediocrity. The same is true of the final grade: one student, having submitted less than 50% of the assigned papers, believes that a Pass grade is owed to her." I sympathize with what this person has to say, but again I would question deeply the continuance of any system--specifically the grade system itself--which has created these confusions in the first place.

No doubt English 101 will continue to be a unique clearing house for a wide range of abilities and interests. This fact is one I much value, just that the college experience is too often limited by area or subject to an increasingly limited focus. In contrast, this course can give very valuable range to the learning experience at a most significant time-- literally the time when these students are entering a context where their own self-determinatinn and ability becomes uniquely their own responsibility and ground for articulation. If English 101 were nothing other than a 'training course' for subsequent college study, I would feel it exceptionally valuable in this way.

Assuming that this course might be used to teach the subject of literature explicitly, together with intensive work in English grammar, the question then is--would its effect be markedly more beneficial to the student? My own experience would argue the contrary to any assumption that it would. I have found --both in this semester's teaching as well as in previous experience with Freshman English--that increased articulation and ability to read and write English effectively tend to come in situations where 'objective' pressures are minimal and emotional content, range of possible interests and points of focus, the 'right and interest to be heard, are maximal. Students have first to feel, that what they say and read is significant in a way clear to themselves, before they will undertake either with much effect. A grading situation which rewards or punishes them for their acts is clearly one approach--but it is one which inhibits the possibility. Insofar as any situation in teaching and learning can be particular to those participating, without decisive external authority otherwise present (in the guise of subject or 'objective' grades), both interest and coherence will result with the effect that learning will be both revelation of oneself and of others.

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Group B

Nancy Vosburgh

Next semester in English B 101 Sect. L9 (the same I had this time around) we will use the following texts: 1. 9 Short Novels, edited by Richard M. Ludwig and Marvin B. Perry and 2. Modern Poetry, edited by Maynard Mack and Leonard Dean and William Frost. Philip Larkin is the youngest poet represented in the poetry collection. Both texts I hope will fill in some of the tradition we have been without this semester. My concerns, in a sense, are directed to the non-literary students in this movement away from comtemporary lit. I would say a healthy (unhealthy?) majority of the 22 students will never, after this year or course, take a look at literature (good!) for its own sake or for any reason-- other than perhaps trying to understand a confused world by reading Valley of

the Dolls or Games People Play. All agreed that our immersion in the American fiction (we mainly concentrated on this source) was refreshingly revelatory of past and personal "prejudices." For most it was a window into a oft-thought-of world, but never expressed. It is most difficult to speak of intention (of the author or his masque) in the cases of several of the stories, though techniques have a good deal to tell in themselves. One often attempts to teach appreciation -- but there is a certain awkwardness about what the student refers to as the teacher's "criticism" or "sacred interpretation." We tried to plow through this very question: they are bored! I am bored. We seek another text.

Surprisingly enough I coaxed it out of them. Yes, you are potential poets! Why not a journal abstracted for a theme? Why not extend that writing break (so relieving in the midst of French translations and Chemistry cyphers and naughts) to present a thought as a section of yourself to be revealed in words? Yes, it's painful sometimes; if it's truly great, you sweat. There's not much of that here, but on a small scale it is acknowledged. They write, I review. I like grades, some students do too. Some couldn't care less with the pass-fail. Our occasion never seemed to encourage exchange or broadcast of papers resulting in dimly masked plagarisms. The un-honest didn't attend class (which was perhaps one, mainly) or were plainly fearful that peer discussion of papers would reveal such hurry-up discrepancies. I noted that attendance was important (3 cuts, OK) because of the nature of discussions, and many came without wringing of necks simply out of curiousity for the opinions of others in commenting on their writing. They were an honest, bright group but very willing to be lead. Very sociologically oriented! Environment, environment, environment! What is literature? Enjoyment? Excape? Surely this is all there is to it. It can't possibly go beyond 2:50 p.m. MWF. Personal integrity and genuine grappling with reality (and the reality we protectively coin fantasy) in the context of present absurdity views of the world can't really have anything to do with it, can it? It's so puzzling; why do we read anyhow? I guess we're thirsty.

It was a completely different semester. The past was sometimes painful, probably because it was then that I was a beginner; now I know some of the tricks. Students are very pliable, but originally cast. Margins of progress are smudgy but always evident. Pre- and post-class discussions among the students told me that indeed what so-and-so had said about so-and-so's paper generated communication. The class size allowed the 10 or so vocal ones to become fast friends or foes. The class's nature was pessimistic (whether for or against the war in Viet Nam), each individual is searching, most have not reoriented themselves after the removal from high school and home. Some honestly are romantic in the sense of loss of innocence in childhood. A good share are returning next semester.

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy E. Vosburgh

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Group B — Nancy E. Vosburgh

The semester has been a very successful one for me and for my oreientation towards teaching. I think the students also went for the type course the department offered (i.e., rather open and with a pass-fail situation). Offhand, my most difficult problem was overcoming the nature of the texts. As you will note on the survey of student reactions (included with this report) many objected to the "grossness" of the very contemporary poetry and fiction collections. We had long and animated discussions about the nature and value of the literature. I'm afraid the non-literary types in my section were quite surprised and shocked at some of the stories, nevertheless I believe it constituted a needed revelation into a world often privately thought of but never considered "literary." I also believe, along with the majority of the class, that Sapir's Language, as one girl put it, induces sleep in the insomniac. Though we were left relatively free on the use of texts, even to the point of ignoring them and stemming out in new directions, I decided to use the texts as far as possible--

i.e., orient the course toward the sense of communication. The culmination of discussion about Sapir rounded out the question of really which comes first, the thought or the word. The technicalities were lost on the freshmen readers for the most part.

As my interests rather lean toward the "reading" of this course rather than the "writing" my texts next Spring will be: in a more traditional strain, 1. 9 Short Novels edited by Richard M. Ludwig and Marvin B. Perry, and 2. Modern Poetry edited by Maynard Mack et al. Professor Creeley left the choice of texts up to each individual instructor, which I think is the best policy, since we apparently are all teaching 'different' courses. Having introduced some of the basic successes and faults of this section, I can move into a more detailed report of the semester's work.

History of the course: I believe my original intention-- of relating the importance of communication within a certain situation--was fulfilled, but in a very unexpected manner. Feeling the freedom of the pass-fail situation and immediately sensing the ability and head-strong quality in this group, I completely reoriented my course outline. I had planned writing assignments alternated with required reading in the accepted manner to be interspersed with discussions regarding the importance of language, etc. All was well for the first couple of weeks. The first writing assignment was "free" and worked successfully. With my enthusiasm over their poetry, essays, and stories, I continued this policy for the entire semester. It is surprising what they come up with when "I can't think of anything to write about". Sure, there was some half-baked stuff, but many caught the spirit and "used" English as a refreshing change from the ritualized "read-memorize-write" courses. Some students under this type of situation become strangely sober, others freely move from mask to mask, others (only a few though) lose all sense of direction. For all intents, this occasion sent them back to their own resources. Most accepted the challenge. Ironically (with my interest in reading) we moved into a complete writing workshop discussing peer work with advantage. Several students were surprised to find out that their fellow freshmen, both male and female, wrote poetry; and some examples I received were surely first attempts at this--in imitation. Some new forms appeared: essay-poems, essay-stories. The class came to recognize so-and-so's tone or style or so-and-so's sociological orientation. Informal discussions created the best opportunities for them to really talk to each other through the medium of their own creations.

Pass-fail system: As would be expected, the English majors dislike the loss of a grade, the nurses and sociology majors don't care, and the chemistry and engineering majors like it. As for as I could see, plagarism does not thrive in this kind of atmosphers. A couple bemoan the loss of a "goal", but this might only be a hangover from high school indoctrination. With a pass-fail to work properly I believe that class attendance should be noted. Without proper exchange of ideas this "system" cannot work. The basic purpose of grading was to juxtapose their September selves against their December selves. Most of the students improved their writing over the 15 or so weeks.

Teaching this course and applying techniques to other sections: With the relative freedom of this type of course, use student resources to the maximum. One should be guided by the collective nature of a class. I found that half lecture, half discussion worked the best; talk rarely generated without an introductory "address" of orientation and theory. Over this we took issue. Reading assignments must be kept current.

Course description: The description seems adequate to me as "Reading and Writing". Anything more technical or explicit would destroy the communications approach which may end up something quite different than planned.

Working as a Staff: We all discovered we were teaching different courses. Regular twice monthly meetings were held. With past teaching experience, I enjoyed seeing my own beginner's problems almost universal. Yet, the teacher-student relationship alters ever semester, and no discussion was fruitless. Not having, in the past, worked as closely with a group in setting up a freshman section, I believe this is the way it should be done in the future. The opportunity for airing even small points is helpful.

Group B

Gary Davis

Perhaps the most effective way in which to discuss the semester's work within the section would to briefly describe the course requirements, for this particular section, and then present a number of the basic problems which arose. On the whole, the requirements were designed as solutions to major problems within the class.. However, a number of these problems remained essentially unsolved.

The assigned anthologies, New American Story and New American Poetry, were used as basic texts. But, for a number of reasons which will be fully discussed later, the emphasis was not placed upon the reading of poetry. Joyce's Dubliners was used in the first half of the semester. It was hoped that by concentrating upon the consistent use of image patterns and thematic construction within that book, the students might carry this same technique into their own writing. For the most part, this proved to be a failure. Attempts to avoid total pedantry, by means of the use of contemporary music and films, were generally complete fiascoes. In regard to this student reaction was similar to the reaction to contemporary literature, and was expressed by one student as a request for "More literature and less of this modern garbage." Concerning music and film, the students' attitude was on which was dominatied by the idea that anything which may be heard on the phonograph or radio, er seen on the movie screen, was merely "entertainment". Attempts to discuss linguistics were total failures, and Sapir's Language was left to gather dust on the students' shelves.

In regard to the "Writing" aspect of the "Reading and Writing" course, a number of points must be made. The general requirments, in this area, consisted of sixteen papers, ranging in length from three to six pages, a mid-term examination, and a ten page term paper. Though topics were varied for the weekly papers, generally they were of the essay form. This was done for a number of reasons. The initial papers from many of the"he don't" variety (in five of these papers) rather than of the subtler split-infinitive type--but a general inability to construct a logical paragraph, let alone a coherent analytical essay. The assigned topics were designed to rectify this situation.

Perhaps the major difficulty within this section was caused by the composition of the class itself. It would seem to be a tacit assumption, in a course entitled "Reading and Writing" and using literature as one of its basic means of teaching writing, that a number of students would have at least some interest in literature. Generally, however, this was not the case. Discussion of the various works, in any depth, became endless tedium to a class which had little interest in literature.

Undoubtedly because of the section's scheduling for 8:00 a.m., the class was comprised entirely of nursing and engineering students. This in itself presented a problem, since most would have benefited more from a course which emphasized technical writing. Further, a class of this nature could not be expected to be overly enthused about the prospect of literature. This should not be construed as the traditional condemnation of scientists and technicians for being uniterested in the "arts", especially in light of the fact that the only two students in the class who knew anything about literature were nursing students. But clearly the focus of the course was not suited to the composition of the class. Here, the difficulty lay in scheduling rather than in the course itself. Various attempts were made to mediate the situation, namely by treating the analysis of literature in terms of scientific principles, but little more could be done, since the instructor possessed only the most rudimentary knowledge of science and knew technical writing only indirectly.

This situation caused further difficulties in the discussion of literature. For the most part, the students were ignorant of major works of literature. Works which were assumed to have been at least mentioned in high school were totally unknown to most students: only two students had ever read a Shakespearean play, two had heard of Dante, four had heard of Joyce, five had read a Dickens' novel or had seen a movie version, most had heard of Whitman, though only one had read a Whitman poem. Explications therefore often became lectures on

literary analogues and backgrounds, since little or nothing could be assumed, in regard to the students' readings. The same problem was encountered in attempts to place works within historical or social perspective.

In many ways, the problems confronted within the context of the teaching of composition were greater. Here, too, much of the difficulty was caused by secondary schools which seem to have been non-existent. Generally, the specific writing problems of the students were caused not so much by a lack of intelligence as by the simple fact that they had never done any writing previous to the course. One student, in fact, stated that he had never written a "composition" in high school. Sentences, within the initial papers, either resembled those one might expect as the production of ten-year-olds, or ran on for twenty to thirty words and included three or four major topics of discussion. A few examples might serve to illustrate this:

> The Queen also refused to speak Navajo, because it would bring the poor Navajos into the cafe. Anyone knows that you can't make money on a poor Navajo.
>
> She bought a cafe in a small "white man's" community. An atmosphere of a regular cafe was created by the use of posters. Posters such as "Real Live White People in Their Native Costumes."

In this case, the problem is not so much the construction of the sentences as it is the fact that, in the student's discussion of the particular short story, he has placed two paragraphs in what is virtually a reversed order. As with many students, basic logical processes seem to be lost within this student's mind and writing, disappearing somewhere in the transition from thought to word.

Another example might be taken from a student whose initial paper dealt with the relative merits of asphalt and concrete as surfacing materials for university walkways:

> Asphalt is cheaper. Students feel when something is cheaper. Maintenance costs are also lower. With asphalt one need only pour it over a crack to repair it. Concrete demands that whole slabs be removed.
>
> To some minds the only good asphalt does is that it can be used to protect concrete from the action of calcium chloride, a deliquescent utilized to keep dust down on roads and from salt employed to prevent frost.
>
> The road ahead is rock enough. A University should attempt to make it as brick yellow as possible and maybe it really would lead to the Emerald City.

Throughout the semester, the major aim within the section was to eliminate many of these problems. However, rightly or wrongly, the direction of the course was pointed towards the construction of essays. This seemed to be the logical aim, since many of the students appeared incapable of writing essays for examinations or term papers, as would be required for their other courses. Thus, in many ways, the writings of the students were designed to give them practice in the techniques which would be necessary for the completion of an academic program. However, since most of the students were not involved in areas in which structural perfection of an essay would be required, the utilitarian aspect of the course made the goal such that the essays be merely "adequate", "coherent", and "intelligible". An example of one student's progress, or lack thereof, might be given.

Though some students had sufficient intelligence and writing ability to enable them to do the assigned papers "off the top of their heads", in one typewritten draft, the majority of the students did not. On the whole, the weekly papers necessitated between three and four hours work, though they were generally of only three to four pages in length. Yet, one of the major problems within the section consisted of getting the students to spend this much time on the papers. The initial papers from the class were rather surprising, since most of the students had said that they felt that a course in freshman composition was unnecessary and/or that they should be exempted because their writing was adequate. The question thus became one of separating which papers

were poor because of students' needs for further writing and which were poor because they were, in essence, "hack jobs". In order to accomplish this, grades were used in the worst possible manner: they became weapons and threats. Students were told that their final average grade for their papers, at the end of the semester, was to be two units higher than the grade on their initial papers or else they would be in jeopordy of failure. Though this threat was never intended to be carried out, it did have the desired effect. On the whole the papers began to improve almost immediately, though often at the cost of a few extra hours of work, and, in two instances, with tearful confrontations with the instructor.

In many ways, the system of grading was necessitated by the"Pass/Fail" structure of the course. The general problem seemed to be that the students, being freshmen, were accustomed to the assignment of grades to their work. On the occasions when "Pass/Fail" grades were assigned there was generally a back-sliding on the part of the students. This seems to have been due to the fact that the students failed to read any lengthy comments placed upon their papers. However, when these comments accompanied a grade, they generally were read with more care. Thus, when a "C" student received an "A" on a particular paper, he generally looked over his work, and the comments, to determine what he had done correctly on that occasion. Grades functioned in much the same fashion in the cases of better students who ocdasionally submitted papers of poor quality, since an awareness of that all-important final average forced them to take greater care in the composition of their next papers.

Grading remained, however, entirely flexible, and a bell-curve system was totally missing. Poorer students were given grades of "A" for work for which better students received "B"s. Thus, grading was usually based upon the individual's past work rather than upon the class as a whole.

The grading system, throughout the semester, seemed to prove effective. Its most important result was that it gave the students a tangible means of gauging their own progress within the course. Initial attempts at returning non-graded papers failed to achieve this end; indications of improvement merely became alternative grades, with various choices of movie-house coming-attractions superlatives replacing letter-grades. The "Pass/Fail" structure for the final grade, however, was effective, for it succeeded in basing the students' final grades upon their own individual improvement. In a class containing two students of superior ability in composition, approximately five of adequate ability, and the remainder of inability, this system provided an equalizer which was highly necessary.

In line with the system of grading, another technique was utilized within the section. This consisted of student graders for each of the weekly papers. Though this failed to benefit any of the students but those doing the actual grading, it was beneficial to those graders. They were required to not only affix a grade, but also to make any grammatical or structural corrections, discuss the ideas presented by the various students, and make suggestions which would facilitate improvement. In essence, this meant that each of the students learned what might have been taught in two or three class sessions--basic composition. But, simutaneously, it allowed the students to develop "taste" on their own, to recognize good composition from bad, to, in a sense, envision how something might be rewritten for better expression. It also gave them an opportunity to see where their own work stood in relation to the work of the rest of the class. Though the ability of the students, as graders, varied, the system did prove to be of value throughout the semester.

One of the primary goals of the course was to aid the students in the construction of analytical essays. These comprised virtually three quarters of the assignments for the semester. Topics were generally assigned, and were designed to facilitate this end. For this reason, many of the essays asked the students to make comparisons, not only between works by a single author, but between different authors, as well. It was hoped that this would enable the students to better perceive relationships and non-relationships between not

not only writing but also between ideas and concepts. By the end of the semester, comparisons were required concerning elements which had little or no actual relationship, in hopes that the students might learn differentiation, as well.

The actual success of this concentration upon essays and analysis varied. Some students never did succeed in grasping the fundamentals required, while others eventually succeeded in constructing good essays. But, improvement took place in all cases. Though some students never discovered a truly literate writing style, most did learn to at least construct an essay which appeared to be informed and informative.

As a part of this aspect of the course, much opportunity was given to the students to write within the confines one-hour time-limit of the class itself. In the second class of the semester, the students were asked to answer a specific question relating to a short story assigned for that day. Surprisingly, the most lengthy student paper consisted of an answer which occupied two sides of a piece of notebook paper, on which the student had skipped every other line. From not only the length of the answers given, but also from the content of the answers, it appeared that the students would be unable to complete the most basic of essay-question examinations. Thus, initially, one class per week was devoted to a similar exercise. By the mid-term exam, this in-class writing was no longer necessary. The students themselves stated that this aspect of the course was the one most beneficial to them, since generally they had never written essay-type examinations in high school.

The work load of the course, in terms of the number of papers submitted, has struck many other teaching assistants as excessive. Yet, suprisingly, few complaints were voiced by the students themselves. The course, within the section, was designed so that the actual work required would diminish as the semester progressed. The basic thesis under which the assignments were given was that consistent writing is the best way in which a student can learn to write. Thus, when the writing of the class reached a level at which the students could successfully answer examination questions and write essays and term papers, the number of writing assignments was reduced. The only papers submitted after Thanksgiving vacations consisted of one three to five page paper and the term paper.

The term paper was assigned to enable the students to have an opportunity to attempt what only three of them had ever done before--write a paper of approximately ten pages which attempted to prove a particular thesis by means of documentation. Here, it was hoped that the students would have learned from their previous essays. On the whole, the term papers proved to be quite adequately written; the majority of comments made upon them were in regard to their ideas and deductions, not upon their writing style. A few term papers proved to be total debacles, but this had been expected.

The actual success of the work within the section remains dubious. Though all but one student made some degree of "Improvement", there remain four or five whose writing is still inadequate for any rigorous college curriculum. The term paper was designed to reveal the extent to which the section itself had been helpful to the students. The topics given as possible choices were made in order to give the students the opportunity to see how a motiv or mode was operative within a novella or novel:

Paper topics:

1) The role of "The American Dream" in <u>The Great Gatsby</u>.
2) The roles of Love and Woman in <u>Catch-22</u>.
3) The Community of Man and the Community of Jews, in either Malamud's <u>Idiot's First</u> or <u>The Assistant</u>.
4) "There are Jews everywhere" as a motif in Malamud's <u>The Magic Barrel</u>.
5) Baseball as Metaphysics, in Malamud's <u>The Natural</u>.
6) The anti-hero, in <u>The Natural</u> or <u>Catch-22</u>
7) The conflict of individual and community in <u>The Subterraneans</u>.

8) Freedom and movement in Kerouac's On the Road.
9) The question of identity in Roth's Good-bye Columbus.
10) Black Humer, in O'connor's A Good Man is Hard to Find.
11) The role of the bandit, in A Good Man is Hard to Find.
12) Area Fiction, in relation to any of the books.

The topics were broad and it was hoped that this would enable the student to display how much he could analyze and interpret, rather than how little. In general, the same papers which failed to display truly adequate writing ability also tended to reveal not what the student knew but what he didn't know. In this respect, the term paper achieved its projected function of determing the extent of the success of the course--there remained the four or five students whose improvement, though measureable, was not very great. Two of these students were of general abilities which made questionable their admission to any university--the simplest idea seemed to be beyond them, and their writing, and analysis, remained well below the rest of the class. The others, however, were victims of their secondary schools. In all cases, these students' attempts at analysis and explication revealed a basic intelligence and ability. But the fact that they had done little or no writing before entering the class kept them from ever really writing an intelligent essay--the ideas were there, but it remained difficult to discover just exactly what the ideas were.

In a sense, this problem, as well as that of the constitution of the class, might easily be solved by a system presently used by the Department in its program in Millard Fillmore College. Effective use of a writing sample from the students as a means of determining the type of course which would be opened to them, would be all that would be necessary. Thus, students who needed what would amount to a course in basic grammar and sentence construction would be required to take such courses. Those of the students capable of writing an essay would have the option of taking the various courses in literature and more "creative" writing. Under the present system, however, instructors are faced with twenty students who need little more than guided practice in order to improve their writing and five who need constant lectures and demonstrations of the most basic of principles. The instructor can only attempt to satisfy the needs of the majority of the class, and attempt to work with the poorer students individually. This by no means solves the problem, for the poorer students receive little help when they are placed in a course which leaves them behind. Though the solution reeks of intellectual snobbery and pedantry, it seems that, at least in the case of the students within this particular section, the results would have been better.

This same basic problem necessitate what amounted to a virtual elimination of the part of the reading list devoted to poetry. The students were ppenly hostile to the topic, and despite a week of gradual introduction into poetry, this reaction never changed. To most of the class, short stories and novels were enough of a chore; poetry was totally rejected. Attempts were made to utilize poems which more closely resembled prose than the students' conceptions of poetry. However, the over-doses of Kilmer and Masefield the students had received in high school generally proved insurmountable. The last month of the semester was spent in trying to discuss poetry. Class attendance, which had ranged from twenty-one to twenty-three students per session, steadily dropped to the point at which there were only seven students consistently attending. This problem was directly related to the composition of the class, and it is a problem which might easily be solved by a re-arrangement of the section-meeting schedules, so that the composition courses and technical writing courses meet early in the morning, when they would not conflict with the schedules of those students whose days are filled with lab sessions. An unequal distribution of the course options, over the day, might solve the problem.

The actual structure of the "Reading and Writing" course generally proved effective. The "Reading" did little to aid the students in their writing, but it did give the class a common ground upon which to base discussions and papers. In this way the course-structure was helpful. The only problem was that few of the students wanted to take that particular course, and that the course was generally unsuited to the needs of the students within the class.

C-101-C102 Writing about Experience

This course will begin with its students' interests, and these will form its subject matter throughout. There will be no formal papers, no texts, no exams. Each student will be asked to keep a journal in which he records and comments on those aspects of his own experience, present or past, which interest him enough to put into words. In particular, he will be encouraged to describe dramatic encounters that he observes or participates in. The leading questions will be, what do you see, and by what means do you convey your experience to a reader. These questions will be pressed in classroom discussions of mimeographed excerpts from the journals, in order to illuminate the various ways in which the mind uses language to shape the world it knows. As soon as individual students appear to have located their central interests, there will be opportunities to attempt more lengthy and ambitious renderings of experience under the special direction of the instructor. Ultimately each student should have a chance to produce one long-considered and weighty piece of writing, good enough and close enough to his own concerns to justify a year's commitment of his time and energies.
Director: Taylor Stoehr
Staff: Aldrich, Bryant, Fox, Gabrielson, Greene, Longenecker, Michaels, Murphy, Randall, Rohrer, Thurston, Ward, Whitener, Zorn

* * *

Group C — Lloyd Michaels

My section of journal writing underwent almost a complete transformation during the fall semester. What began as a formal disciplined class in which students analyzed for point of view, structure, development, etc., the writing of their class-mates at times resembled a dorm bull session by term's end. The change brought with it both advantages and drawbacks.

The first few weeks in a course such as this necessarily involve breaking down the student's resistance to writing about personal experience (and therefore, exposing himself to some extent) and building up his confidence in the teacher and his classmates as a sympathetic and interested audience. Students require that the instructor be interested in what they are doing and, at first, they have no confidence that they have anything interesting to say. I feel I may have slowed the process of gaining their confidence by being a bit "formal" at the outset: tie and jacket (sometimes even a suit), remaining careful to stay behind the desk, using students' last names, being somewhat reluctant to expose myself.

Perhaps the initial step in re-defining the situation was accomplished by bringing in the Beatle's Sgt. Pepper's album. I stenciled the lyrics and we discussed the record as an interpretation of experience and talked about the difference between form and content and the function of irony in a song such as "When I'm Sixty-Four." These classes were markedly more relaxed and the students participated more willingly. By my obvious enthusiasm for the record, I think I began to convince them that, after all, I was one of them. Not incidentally, I began to feel that way myself.

During the first month I received many, many "car accident" and "drive in movie" papers, but also several notable efforts. A Viet Nam veteran wrote a couple of highly literate and perceptive pieces of fiction as well as an autobiographical account which was the first paper we discussed as a class. An Upward Bound student from Harlem wrote two remarkably candid papers (one not for publication) which were particularly interesting for the naturalness of her narrative voice. At the end of the first month one extremely intellectual girl wrote one of the best papers I received all term, a remembrance of a visit to the library which was reprinted in the "Freshman English Review". I later learned she was a junior, having transferred from City College). The class as a whole admired these papers, but despaired of ever being able to write equally well.

Group C (Continued) Lloyd Michaels

The biggest problem throughout the semester in my course was how to make classroom time productive. I don't feel you can teach strictly from dittos all semester. I became bored and the students became bored. The journal idea was also breaking down by the end of October: half the class was convinced that nothing had ever happened to them; another third didn't want to talk about it. We came to a sudden re-evaluation at the same time Prudence received her open letter.

About a week before, I had tried an experiment suggested at one staff meeting. We changed the seating arrangement into a circle and the students - most of whom still did not know each other - were asked to write character sketches. This worked very well. The students enjoyed doing it; they were forced to employ certain writing techniques; most importantly, they got to know each other better. The following class period, devoted to reading the papers, accomplished a further breakdown of the barriers between the students themselves.

The next step involved a general re-evaluation of the intentions of the course and discussion of what we should do for the remaining half of the semester. Students agreed that the "five page requirement" was arbitrary and useless, although they realized that I had no intention of enforcing it anyway. They also complained that they were tired of reading other dittos; many expressed a desire to use a text, or fiction, of some sort. Finally, they asked that I stop calling them "Mr." and "Miss."

The remainder of the semester was much more exciting, both for the students and myself, although I wonder how much "academic" skill they acquired. I continued to comment extensively on individual papers, but spent far less time inside the classroom talking explicitly about writing techniques. I felt, as I told my students, that in a course entitled "Writing about Experience" I could best teach them about writing through my comments on their papers. Class time, then, would be generally devoted to discussing "experience," trying to evaluate the significance of shared events. We often talked about popular culture - my own particular interest - and other topical matters. For example, we spent a class hour talking about such subjects as, the appeal of President Kennedy, the pass-fail system, the Negro revolt, and (I don't remember how) the question of having genitals on male dolls. These classes were balanced by an Updike and Salinger short story and several good papers which came from the students. It is noteworthy, I think, that the discussions of student writing during the second half of the semester, coming less frequently as they did, were more meaningful and productive than those in October.

Students almost unanimously agreed that the highlight of the term was our going to see "Bonnie and Clyde." Twenty out of a class of twenty-five, about half of them with dates, went together one weekday night along with myself. Some of us then went to the rathskeller to talk over the film. And the next two class periods were involved in evaluating both its strengths and weaknesses. I feel strongly that they all benefited from discovering that an "enjoyable" art form is not necessarily ruined by an analysis of the issues it has raised. Several students went back on their own to see the movie the second time and about ten people gave me written reviews (one boy wrote three different reviews!)

I am reasonably certain that nearly all of my students genuinely enjoyed the course, although undoubtedly, many of them for the wrong reasons. On the other hand, a few, while expressing satisfaction at somehow being able to think better felt that they didn't learn how to write better. I would honestly disagree. Those who wrote (that is, steadily and with sincerity), all wrote better at the end of the term. The biggest disappointments, however, were the brightest students, the best writers to begin with. One, for example, never handed in another thing after her library paper, although she did show me work in progress

Lloyd Michaels (Continued)
which she said she would finish by term's end. Another dropped out of sight completely, returning the last day to tell me she simply "didn't want" to write anymore. A third, although he did turn in a few skillful pieces, never did write the short story I encouraged him to work on. For these people, and a few other talented writers, the incentive apparently was lacking. Still, they told me personally that they "got a lot out of the course." I have to wonder.

I could see where I had definitely helped about three previously dormant students. One girl in particular wrote some remarkable sensitive pieces during the last month after being completely anonymous before. She was very appreciative of the course, being an English major but lacking completely any confidence in her own writing abilities, and wrote me a long paper of thanks the last day.

Students are equally divided on the pass-fail system. The main problem remains providing some incentive for achievement. This seems to apply, as I have indicated, more to the superior student than the average or struggling one. Personally, I favor a pass-fail-honors system where a very small percentage of highly talented students can receive some distinction without diminishing the basically non-competitive standard of the "passing" grade. (Incidentally, all of my students received "P's," although at least three of them would not have had the ground rules of the course as I established them been different.)

I would like to conclude with two other suggestions, the first far less imperative than the second. I would personally prefer teaching (as I did last year at another university) two periods a week for eighty minutes each, rather than the present three-period system. Many class discussions are difficult to get "rolling" until the last ten minutes of the hour and then have to be cut short. Furthermore, it is often difficult to plan three separate classes per week, particularly when students have not submitted much writing at the previous meeting. I have spoken with several colleagues about this point and they seem about equally divided.

Finally, it seems to me one of the great advantages of freshman English at this University is the wide variety of courses being offered to entering students. This advantage is completely defeated, however, when the Administration then fails to grant the student's request. In a journal writing course, in particular, it is absolutely necessary that the student be personally committed to that type of writing. As instructors, we cannot ask our students to "write for yourself" (as we all do in this course anyway) when, in fact, journal writing was his fourth choice in the summer. I realize that the administrative problems are considerable, but the simple fact remains that not one of my students had initially signed up for "writing about experience" as his first choice.

Group C — Michael Greene

In a reversal of normal report procedure I will mention the successes first (with qualifications) and follow them with a recital of failures since I believe that the failures have been more helpful in determining the content of the second semester. I am convinced that every student learned something about writing and in fact, most of them improved their writing to a noticeable degree. However, this progress took place mostly in the first weeks of the semester when we concentrated on breaking down the tendency to write highschool papers which showed a good grasp of vocabulary words that are only useful in technical manuals and the "life-has-a-funny-way-of-painting-pictures" type of ending. One of the main difficulties encountered was the problem of trying to convince a student who had made one advance that there were further possible improvements. Most of the class, after they had learned something, were

Michael Greene (Continued)
satisfied and continued to hand in the same paper which had been so exciting at first but which became so dreary after the third time. This problem doesn't improve the teacher's concentration of correcting either. By the end of the semester I was sick of seeing perfect little papers with dialogue, dramatic action and conflict, and no overt moralizing. However, it proved impossible to convince people to write opinionated essays, poems, stories, letters, or anything but their specialties at this point.

A number of students got to know each other, learned something about what college should be from the relaxed atmosphere, and began to contribute to the class by the end of the semester. It proved impossible to get any of my students embarked on a long project. Although there were several students with the skill to begin something lengthy they didn't seem to have the necessary awareness about what they were doing to see the possibilities in their material. After I pointed out the possibilities to several of them, they attempted to follow their work through but ended up repeating themselves and demonstrated that they just didn't see the possibilities. Perhaps this resulted from the heavy concentration on writing about experience in the beginning. Since freshmen tend not to see patterns in experience they were unable to put any pattern in their work or even to follow a pre-existent pattern.

Although I still believe in the theories on which the course was based, I am disappointed in the way that freshman reacted to it. Over and over I was asked to provide the stimulus of coercion. A large percentage of the students abused the course privileges by failing to show up and writing very sloppy papers which were obviously dashed off in the snack bar so that I would be fooled into believing that they were writing regularly. In some cases, this can be explained by feelings of inferiority. Some of the students just didn't believe they could write well and it was impossible to convince them otherwise. However, there were a number of talented students who stopped working because it was clearly possible to do so. They can be explained by the pressures of freshman work, immaturity, etc., but these students are not getting anything out of the course, and with a minimum level of coercion they at least would have done some work.

Next semester I plan on using four books: Northrop Frye's Educated Imagination, Heller's Catch-22, Hamlet, a volume of modern poetry selections, and I am going to have them see Mike Nichol's The Graduate. One of the main reasons that I am using these texts is so that those who don't learn much about writing can learn something about "realityculturetheworld." These books and the film will provide us with something to discuss when I am sick of discussing my trip to the beach.

One of my most illuminating experiences came when I read two poems to the class last semester. They were both very simple poems, purely sensory, full of good description, and experience. One of my students told me that he had never seen a poem that said anything better than an essay and the entire class agreed with him. This led me to emphasize poetic experience for a while, and I discovered that they were totally unable to read a poem. They had no sense of the music or the flow of words. Then I brought in a section of Areopagitica and a piece of Acrobat Admits, a black comedy and asked them to discuss the stylistic differences. They didn't see any.

What this demonstrates, I think, is that the students in freshman English, at least in my section, can't read. I don't believe that a person can write well unless he can read because in reading if one knows how you naturally pick up prose rhythms and correct ways of describing things - all of the technical tricks that teacher is pulling out of the air. Therefore, this semester we are going to concentrate on learning how to read by attempting to read things and then hearing them read by authors on records or by students who know how. Hopefully, this will teach some people rhythm which is sadly lacking in all

Michael Greene (Continued)
but a few papers.

My experiences with composition papershas led me to believe that even if they are perfectly correct, they are awful because there is no rhythm to them, no sense of words. Therefore, we will try anything that can correct this during the second semester.

Group C H. Norvell Bryant

On the first day of classes, twenty-three students appeared in Trailer 4 for the first meeting of Section E5, English 101C. All twenty-three passed. Of the two registered students who were not at that meeting, one resigned officially and the other simply ceased to come to class or hand in any work.

The first day, we discussed the goals of the course, which they appeared to grasp, and my expectations regarding the amount of work to be handed in, etc. There was some concern over the fact that they would not be receiving quality points for a "pass," but they were generally pleased with the opportunity to communicate their experiences in writing, without much emphasis being placed on punctuation and spelling.

At the second meeting, I received five papers, all of which were a neat five pages in length. Coincidentally, these five were from those students who continued to write most regularly throughout the semester. Three of the five concerned themselves with college life, derogatorily. Despite the preliminary "goal-setting," they were brimful of unsupported generalizations and stock opinions. At the third session, therefore, discussion centered around the need for adequate description and, if possible, dialogue.

Soon, the first local "genre" made its entrance. In the search for the "significant experiences" in their lives, a couple of girls wrote papers about their sexual experiences--very delicately, very decently. These were "contemporary" accounts of college beer blasts and aftermaths. I mimeographed them and they were greeted in class discussion with pleased shock and a seeming respect for the writers' courage in offering such personal material to such an audience. Within a week, I was flooded by sexual experiences, generally of lessening quality and, probably, honesty. As one boy soon suggested, it was as if the class had decided that my mind naturally tended toward the lewd; they thought they had "psyched me out."

Actually, the "genre" served several useful ends. It led to a discussion of "obscenity" in literature and college and also to a look at the difficulties involved in fictionalizing. On the first of these points, I brought in a copy of Webster's definition of "obscenity;" it was discussed for a few minutes, and we finally arrived at the conclusion that its proper use depended more on the author's intent than on any "objective" criterion. If the boy who objected was right in his judgment that some others were simply trying to "gross me out," then those papers were "obscene." It was also noted by the class that, in those cases where the "intent" was doubtful, there had been a falling off of quality--such papers tended to imitate, rather poorly, the "Midnight Stand Reader" literature. This led to a discussion of fictionalizing and the problems involved in relating events long past in which vraisemblance must be maintained with imagined detail.

The second theme--"reality" and "fiction"--cropped up again and again, more frequently as the usual distinctions between the two began to break down in the authors' minds. It was eventually suggested, by a student, that the "reality" of a situation lay in the emotions of the one experiencing it, rather than in the circumstances surrounding those emotions, though the former are bound in the latter.

H. Norvell Bryant (Continued)

Another "genre" appeared in the entries of two or three students. These, whose primary interests appear to have been sports, usually employed the daydreaming present tense, although they were dated years into the future. It proved impossible to move these people from their "rut," so I insisted only that the daydreams be full and interesting--in itself almost too much a task for them. I've no doubt that the "real" selves of these people were richer than their straitjacketed productions, but there was no way--short of brutality--to get at them. At any rate, in their own vein, these too improved.

Unfortunately, "escapes" from the "chore" of examining their own lives and surroundings were common. In only a few cases did the students continue their initial interest in writing about their own experiences. Most, I believe, began to feel that they had, in running through their stock of "traumatic experiences," also exhausted the supply of significant involvements with others. It was to be expected, perhaps, that their minds would turn first to those events which others--parents, psychologists, priests, and so forth--would call "significant" by type, and that that small number of "worthy" moments would quickly be used up; it was not so apparent, at the outset, that they would have such difficulty in finding "worth" in the vast rest of themselves. For some, as I have said, the "way out" was to construct daydreams, filled with action and over-running--almost by design--the crucial matters of meaning, descriptive detail, and dialogue with "play-by-play" narration. On such fields, the boundaries are clearly marked and the "rules" known beforehand; rewards follow performances as a matter of course. Evidently, these people saw nothing so neat in their own lives, realized the hard work involved in self-examination, and gave up. Others, running short of "traumas," reviewed the same basic few in different fictional or formal guises, setting up virtually the same situations each time, but with a new cast of characters or in dramatic or poetic form. At the extreme, one student, toward the end of the semester, recopied almost exactly her early paper about being deflowered.

This unwillingness to exercise imagination and critical faculty regarding themselves may simply be due to laziness and an ingrained habit of "getting by;" more likely, it is a combination of those things and a deeper-lying dissatisfaction with the arrangement of the course. The task of self-expression at first seemed momentous and grand; it suggested large-scale effort (something long and deep). The fresh ambitions of September, however, found little satisfaction in the five-page weekly entry "routine," constituting as it did the major work requirement of the course. Within such small scope, an excellent product often just didn't seem worth the effort.

The final papers I received support some such view of what was going on in their minds. I had already--perhaps unwisely--told the students that all those still in the course were "passing" and would certainly pass if they handed in a final paper. It is my understanding that other classes didn't count so heavily on that paper, but I was determined to see just what my students would do with it. In answer, I received papers that were, in each case, superior to the shorter entries by the same students. There was no real reason for any of them to put themselves out--fifteen pages of pure trash would have met the legal requirements, but they were obviously interested in the project and unwilling to spend so much time and thought on less than a good piece of work. They felt challenged.

In the last month of the course, I was sometimes forced--lacking new papers to discuss--to resort to published works that were relevant to what I imagined to be their interests. Although I was disappointed with the participation in these sessions, several of the final papers reflect an attempt on the students' parts to work out similar themes on their own. Other "digressions" included a record and text of Dylan Thomas reading his own work, "rock" music as a parallel

H. Norvell Bryant (Continued)
to some piece of work by a student (looking for possible sources of his diction, rhythm, etc.), and period spent silently--at times--describing someone else in the room. Each of these experiments in easing the weight of boredom bore interesting fruit in later journal entries.

In part, my decision to bring in "outside" materials was prompted by student desire to move outside themselves and into "literature," seeing whether methods used on their papers and in class discussion were also applicable to "great" authors. In general, however, I am convinced that there is a valuable distinction between the work of "survey" courses and that of a "journal" course like 101C, and that the too-frequent introduction of the "greats" into the latter will result in the students' too-consciously propping themselves on the most recent stylistic crutch.

Also during the last month, I was once met by only two students at the trailer; the three of us sat in on a freshman Shakespeare course next door and then went on to the Student Union Rathskeller to talk about that class and their papers. Soon, the Shakespeare instructor came by and began mildly to criticize the "journal" course and its mechanics; offering little myself to the conversation. I was surprised to find the two students--neither of them exceptional--rebutting her arguments vigorously. I had thought the classes similarly apathetic but, even near the end of the semester, these two (male) students felt they had in no way wasted their time. Strangely enough, they had enjoyed their respite from the "masters" and the chance to practice and polish their own powers of speech.

I was gratified.

In sum, Section E5, English 101C was a success, though not an unqualified success. The failure lay in an increasing boredom; the young journalists gradually lost interest in themselves and, until the "final" paper, their entries grew fewer and shorter. In a course as initially unstructured as this, such loss of interest might seem fatal, but the number and quality of those finals I received convince me that the basic goals of the course were nearly all met.

The "pass/fail" grading system is worth continuing, at least in this course. My students, while missing the competition for grades, the obvious opportunity to "excel," quickly grasped the need for them to provide most of the classroom initiative. That is to say, they accepted the responsibility, whether they turned in papers or voiced guilt pangs. Five or six regularly, twelve or fifteen more infrequently would even offer a comment in class discussion. They all seem to have realized that, if there was anything worthwhile in English 101, it was individual expression of individual thought, a semester's exercise in a life-long skill--not an intellectual "pie-eating" contest in which those gorged fullest on "facts" receive the highest final awards.

I would favor limiting this course to one semester, while raising the number of long papers to two. Those students I taught were both capable of and willing to produce that much work in addition to the shorter entries. I believe the observed boredom grew out of months of two-to-five page entries, the possibilities of which are limited, though large. The length, style, and even subject matter of such entries tended to become fixed, as the students discovered that their real ambitions in writing would not be fully tried until the semester's end. Even on that last paper, I feel they were a bit disappointed that their endeavors would probably never reach their classmates' ears. Were there two long papers, one due after Thanksgiving and the other after Christmas, several improvements would result. First, the brisk initial interest in the course would be sustained by a fairly immediate challenge; discussions would from the first concern both the short papers in hand the techniques of fitting or expanding these to greater scope and significance. Second, the "Thanksgiving"

papers could (and should) be read aloud in class and appraised; this gives the author the chance he wants, to be heard at length and criticized on other than picayune points. I got the feeling both that the students wanted such a challenge and that they also wanted to hear longer entries from the other students; they did not feel justified in saying much, good or bad, about very brief things. After Thanksgiving, the oral readings and discussions could "mix" the two sorts of paper, providing more variety and an easier grasp of the small within the large.

For the instructor, this change in the mechanics of the course would provide another source of material; if occasions arise when little is coming in day-to-day, he can use two or three of these papers without sacrificing interest and without feeling obliged to go "outside" for discussion materials.

Group C — Robert Randall

The emphasis in the beginning of the semester was on awareness--the theory being that writing improves as awareness increases. For purposes of simplification the class could be divided into three groups: 1) the writing of the two students who were already sensitive to meaningful experience improved only as those students became more willing to reveal themselves; 2) five or six students were on the verge of some kind of breakthrough--they were coming to realizations about themselves which were revelations--and their writing improved in accordance with the awareness achieved; and 3) the writing of the rest of the students improved only insofar as the student learned what kinds of papers I liked (although there were three students whom I never did reach, and whose writing was consistently poor throughout).

I found that private tutorials were helpful for the first two groups only--talking to the first about writing techniques and to the second about their personal experiences. Class discussions helped only the third group (the students in the first two tended to be more introverted), but not because they found writing about personal experience meaningful--they learned more how to deal with my personal prejudices.

The last few weeks of the semester were devoted to a close reading of a novel. There was a definite correlation between an increased understanding of the novel and improvement in writing. It seems that one major reason for deficiencies in a student's writing is his lack of the ability to read. That is, defense mechanisms constructed to defend one from the painfulness of awareness of reality are also used to protect one from the secondary experience of reading about experience. And these are barriers that can be dealt with in the classroom (although texts are not necessarily the best means).

Once students come to terms with their own barriers to awareness, grades become irrelevant. If this point can be reached in a class, then the pass-fail system assumes a definite value, since learning and writing become more valuable to the student than grades.

Group C — Carl Murphy

Although I still support the ideological premises upon which C-101 is conceived, I do so in the face of existential failure. My students did not give the course form nor did 65% do any real work in the first semester. Sad to say, even of the 35% who fulfilled requirements, the majority did so out of a sense of duty. These are the people who were well toilet trained and who, by dint of perseverance, get A's no matter what they do. Their work was always correct and always joyless.

The course failed because my students attached no value to their perceptions. Not that they had no perceptions but that they had no way to deal with them except with a kind of suburban blandness which blurrs all distinctions and properly neutralizes all the rough edges. This was dramatically evident when I read Allen Ginberg's Sunflower Sutra in class. Even with a mimeographed copy

Carl Murphy (Continued)
of the poem in front of them, no discussion was forthcoming. Finally, out of frustration, I "did" the poem, explicating line by line and drawing out allusions.

After class one of my better students approached me to go have coffee. He said he hadn't talked in class because he didn't like the poem. I was hopeful-perhaps he had made the connection that it was a bad poem. No, he said, he didn't like it because it was about San Francisco and he's never been there. So I swallowed and told him it was about Buffalo too, and that's why I'd read it. Then in the course of the conversation some of my abiding fears were confirmed. This person had no experience of Buffalo. When he went downtown in his car, he took his suburban environment with him; went into a Main St. department store which catered to suburbanites, and having correctly noticed nothing different at all got back into his car and returned to suburbia.

For this person the city is an extension of suburbia. There are no distinctions and hence no valuable perceptions..Industrialism, urban blight, the ghetto are more or less meaningless to him. Importantly, because he doesn't understand the city he doesn't really understand suburbia. He has no real perception of the urban civilization which is America. He does not know America; he does not know himself.

This person is a typical representative of my class: typical in his blindness but atypical in his desire to break out of his bag.

Finally, it should be said that an 8 o'clock class does not really promote creative reflection nor does it attract those who are creatively reflective in the first place. Most of my students are there out of necessity since a large number are nurses and engineers and this is the only free slot in their otherwise busy schedule. Those who freely choose this time soon make good their mistake by not coming if they're intelligent or by sleeping in class if they're dull.

Next semester we will be doing more reading. Last semester we did <u>One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest</u> and <u>Last Exit To Brooklyn</u>. I want to see if my students can have vicarious experience through art and thus sharpen their perception. There were some small signs of success last semester. I will continue to use the journal and I will ask my students to record their reactions to the assigned literature as well as whatever connections they make between the literature we read and the lives they lead. Withal I hope for some kind of passionate response. The books include: <u>Growing Up Absurd</u>, <u>Nova Express</u>, <u>Invisible Man</u>, <u>An American Dream</u>, <u>the Quiet American</u>, <u>Catch-22</u>, <u>100 Selected Poems By E. E. Cummings</u> and <u>The Educated Imagination</u>. Excluding the last book, the theme of the reading is America as seen by seven writers.

Group C Mark Zorn

I PASS-FAIL

Most students as you probably know are against it--though the rationalizations are many (D work & A work lumped together, this is unfair, fouls up quality points) the real reason is the chance to get that big A or (PE majors) that nice old B. The impression they get from the looseness of class structure is that they could all get good grades (ha ha). I don't buy the grading system for Journal, although I would like some method of differentiating the good from the bad which is more powerful than telling the non-workers that they are low in my subliminal estimation of them.

I think grades would make kids produce better stuff more surely than assignments. Most of my kids took their inner compulsions to write pretty seriously. What I'd really like is some way of dumping on the kids who don't do a bloody thing.

II SELECTED EVALUATIONS BY THE STUDENTS (Mark Zorn - Continued)

Most did not feel that specific assignments are necessary. And most reacted very well to the huge amount of freedom offered them in the course. Two did little work, another two a bare minimum. There was a general slack of material to discuss in the last few weeks. All of the "big" projects started out beautifully and gradually lost steam until they fizzled to nothing. Here is an evaluation by one of the latter:

"The idea of a pass-fail course is a good one provided that the terms of a student's status are carefully defined. By this I am referring to the establishment of a set minimum amount of work to be submitted per week and the enforcement of this minimum. Practice is essential in the development of anything. With so much required work placed upon myself from other courses, I've found it almost impossible to prepare work for a course which doesn't really require that this work be submitted, even though I would much rather be attempting work for this course than for the others."

The real reason he didn't do the work he was capable of is that he was a bit scared to delve into himself--for which reason I will set up more individual conferences with the long-term writers next term.

A comment from one of the two best writers: (he worked hard);

"Those who don't produce things good for themselves or who have small ability should be relied upon to produce verbally in class--demand it: if they get good at accurately expressing themselves verbally, then that's learning too.....When people have their work reviewed in class they should be able to tell the class what they were trying to say, how they were trying to do their ideas in the medium they were working in and style of work. This gives the others a view of more depth into the person's work and they can understand better instead of going in circles and wrong directions."

Yes. The kid should have to defend himself from the word go. Perhaps next term I will have the author read and defend his own piece and have the others criticize him directly.

The next piece is by the most prolific writer in the class:

"I read many good pieces in class. Some of them were not good from a technique point of view. But presented good ideas the true feelings of the authors. Others fell short. The ideas presented seemed to be toned down. Or doctored so as not to offend anyone. This then is the failure of 102. It does not convince the student that he is free to write his true feelings.....If the instructor can convey to the students this freedom of expression, the real meaning of the class will come through."

Getting this one was something of a shocker. Primarily because the emphasis of the class was not on ideas in the first place (that is, after the creative writing emphasis was made apparent half way through the term) but on modes on expression. I think that you have to read in between the lines on Bill's statement: to a certain extent he's saying that I didn't manage to overcome some natural embarrassments--that is, that most of the kids who weren't doing creative writing still wrote DO NOT PUBLISHtm me and pretty innocuous stuff for the edification of the rest of the class. More importantly, this state of affairs was a result of my continual emphasis on form rather than content--that is, too many "How can the writing be improved?" and not enough "what do you think of what he's SAYING?" questions. The former, I now believe, get somewhat less response than the latter and while I don't think the idea of form should be dropped altogether, next term I will most certainly discuss content a lot more. I will not stick only to Journals, but I won't really hammer at the "Creative writing" idea either--e.g. another comment from Bill:

Mark Zorn (Continued)

"Another problem is method of expression to be used. Do you stay with Journals or do you use, like our class did, many methods. I personally prefer the many method idea. This allows the freedom of expression that I wrote about. If you want to write a play, write it. No one expects an Albee. But if your ideas have come through, then you have succeeded in writing a good play. This then is the method I would use. Allow each student to choose the creative method he most enjoys. Give him free expression of ideas (make this clear from the start), then sit back and reap the rewards."

I think that the kids really prefer the interplay of ideas and impressions offered in Journal, but they have trouble reconciling this approach with the conventional taking-notes form of education. But I think that generally, they like it:

"Writing a problem down seemed to help me clear my mind a little bit, which helped a lot, even if I would often rip the paper up after I finished it. Education is an experience. I've learned pages of facts, but these facts are impersonal and can be, and often are, easily forgotten. But personal impressions are not easily, if ever, forgotten."

(From an engineering student, an excellent writer who NEVER wanted anything published).

III SUMMARY OF THE PROGRESS OF THE COURSE

The concept of the Journal which I started out with was, I now believe, doomed from about the third week on. The reason, as I see it, was that the writing I chose to publish in the Journal category was so good, or so weird, that the rest of the class more or less lost heart. For example, Bill Fitzpatrick, the most prolific writer in the class, never actually wrote a journal; most of his stuff was in the short-story range, and I chose to publish quite a bit of it. Because he used so many different forms, the class sessions tended to revolve around the perfection of the form itself. This was foolish, because Bill himself was incapable of settling on one form and would have much preferred to discuss his ideas. Still, it was from the quality of his work (any my own bias, admittedly) that the idea of splitting the journal into genres evolved.

Then, of course, I would get Ludwig's journals--the stream-of-consciousness stuff. This work was so imaginative that the rest of the class began to feel that their own work was mundane in comparison. It was, and I should probably have emphasized the fact--they never did react to my "blow your mind"-type exhortations. They never really accepted Ludwig's type of writing. I emphasized that L's work was a process of discovery and exploration, which is precisely what the journal should be. Then I contrasted it to writing as a "product" of certain ideas formed prior to composition. What precisely I was trying to prove by the contrast mercifully eludes me, but I am inclinedto believe that it was a harmful distinction. For I think I equated loose writing with the former and tight writing with the latter category--the emphasis, you see, was already on form, and the kids never recovered from the shock.

We moved on from that, however, and I got some pretty varied pieces of work. The death-blow to the journal came with Keller's "Laughlin's" paper. It was so good that the kids kept worrying about their own comparative lack of ability, and never really got over the shock. They were depressed, too, about their comparative lack of material, but I am convinced that my emphasis on the quality of the writing rather than ideas discouraged them even more. That was mid-October. In an attempt to fire their imaginations, I moved fairly quickly into the possibility of fictionalizing, and got several good pieces from kids who didn't know what to do with the journal (any more than I did.) Then came the idea of rewrites. I still think that if you're going to teach the kid something about form, this is one of the better ways to do it. And it gives

Mark Zorn (Continued)
direction to the comments on their papers. The problem it entails is a matter of quantity. Say a kid writes a fairly good paper. You hold publication, writing for the rewrite.

When you get it, you find minor variations. If it IS a huge expansion, it's usable--but probably too long to type up with the original. So you read it out or have the kid (bless me) do so--thereby losing the whole point of the exercise for the class, i.e. detailed analysis of organization -- you have to refer back to their memory of the reading.

So we discussed postry for a while--and even when I got a good quantity of fiction from a kid, i.e. a longer story, he'd be too sick of the damn thing once he'd finished it to want to rewrite it. This is what happened after Thanksgiving.

Net result: I think the kids learned a bit more than what I said in my poem. I harangued them so much with opinion what some of it must have sunk in. My purpose wasn't vague; but my actual conducting of class-lessons probably was. For the greater part of the term they enjoyed my performance; their own enthusiasms were high. Toward the end there were a lot of cuts; writing tailed off--1½ months isn't enough time, evidently, to come personally to grips with a particular form. If they didn't practice it all perfectly, they have a swell idea of the theory. So I'd call the course a qualified success rather than a qualified failure.

IV PROGNOSIS FOR NEXT TERM

1. Bill's "many method" idea to be adopted, under the general title of Journal. I will view "form" simply as a means of getting the ideas out and onto the page.
2. Emphasis on the free expression of ideas. If the "journal" method is used, the ideas MUST be backed up by experience. This is actually so for all methods: I REFUSE to read another war story by a deferred student with pacifist sympathies.
3. To unify class experience on at least one issue, and also because I like the book, I will assign and discuss Hesse's Siddhartha at some point during the term. Again, emphasis on idea rather than form. This is to be used perhaps if I detect a lag: in a Christian classroom, the results should be delightful and revolting.
4. Elimination of the periodic "Well, kiddies, how do you think we're doing--you're not bored, are you?" approach. If I sense it, I'll do something about it, but I'm damned if I'll ask their opinion. What else are staff meetings for?

Group C — Linda Thurston

From the first, the classroom experience was dictated by the students themselves in that the content of the course was exclusively their ideas as they appeared in the journals. (There were a few days when we treated extensions of these ideas: I taught a poem by Roethke after several bad poems were submitted as journal entries, and I taught the Fugs as social satire after a journal entry recorded the experience of listening to Ed Sanders in Norton--but you can read about that class in the Spectrum. I, of course, imposed the form: they had to keep journals of personal experience, they had to write often (I left the interpretation of "often" to them), they had to sit in a circle (well, they didn't have to, but no one ever suggested that we change), they had to discuss each day the journal entries that I had selected and mimeographed (again, they know they were free to introduce any other relevant material, and occasionally a spontaneous piece written during the class was offered). There was some opposition to my control ("People in my journal class...are forced into writing a journal which they do not want to do. This

Linda Thurston (Continued)
brings a subconscious opposition. Although the student may put forth his upmost (sic) effort, every effort will be in vain. This causes a dislike for the journal and the class and hostility toward everyone in the class especially the tyrant or instructor. The rebellious attitude of the students causes low grade writing, which can be seen throughout the examples in class....'). But no alternatives were offered, and most of the opposition came from the students who wrote most often and came to class regularly.

Each day, we looked at the ideas written about. The author was never identified, unless for a special reason, as when he wanted to defend an idea. I thought that as they realized that each critic had a different understanding of the idea as presented in the journal entry, and sometimes had (or claimed to have) no understanding at all, that the writing was somehow not good enough. Often the writer realized that his idea was no better formed than his account of it, but when he did understand what he was trying to say but was not saying it, we tried to analyze the failure, working always from the particular to the general. One limitation of this approach of course is that some writing problems are not treated, but on the other hand, those problems most common for this group received the most attention.

They seemed to like journal writing--although these 102 students had not selected the course--and to do it easily. I urged them repeatedly to write about what was most meaningful for them, because their writing would be (and was) best then. I may not have defined "meaningful" well enough, because it was read "personal" or "intimate" by most students. It may be that in adolescence they are synonymous--that may be a consideration we have not discussed enough--because the journals in my class revealed an Oedipal complex, a semester-long love affair with a heroin addict made more agonized by interference by a jealous mother, an inferiority complex caused by parental rejection (the paper-doll burning and the waiting with lollipop at the airport), and the case of the dreams that were not dreams at all but the cause of a' suicide threat..

I can definitely say, however, that as they wrote about more meaningful experiences, their writing improved, even when they wrote during the experience (as I tried to demonstrate with the hand-written "Frustration" paper that I Xeroxed for them). They were able to treat such subjects only, it seemed to me, if they trusted both me and the class. The first was little problem for most of the students (notable exceptions, of course: The Upward Bound girl, who wrote almost nothing until almost the end of the semester, and the 35-year old man, who never did stop writing factual accounts of televised sports events, with an occasional treatise on the weather). Trusting the class was slower and more difficult for most. I thought familiarity would help, so I had them write about each other. The results of that exercise indicated that they already thought they knew a lot about each other; their almost universally inaccurate perceptions of each other were grounded primarily in prejudices. That was clear to them when we discussed the results in class. The rest of the effect was ambiguous: they knew their work might be insensitively treated by other members of the class, but they also knew that the others were not afraid to state their opinions, which could be then opposed. My second attempt to create trust among them was a class held at home, where I thought they could talk to each other informally, have an experience together outside the trailer, etc. I had given them offprints of an article by McLuhan that treated many of the ideas we had discussed in class; we discussed the article that night so that it was clearly a class and not a party, although informal. I really don't know whether trust increased among the students; the most important result, after the evening was over, seemed to be that the subjects we had been discussing in class gained some reality, some validity, by being the subject of

Linda Thurston (Continued)
discussions not only outside the trailer but with other people (Mike, Carl, Cedric, Mark). They were no longer just the stuff of the journals.

Toward the end of the semester, although most of the students were still writing and coming to class, we all began to be bored, mostly because the writing had become boring. They had written the ideas that had come easily; the mystery surrounding the other students was over (they had jumped by now from one level of prejudgment to the next). In an attempt to reveal to them the value of this opportunity--an environment created especially for the constructive evaluation of their creations--I divided the class into five groups and made each group responsible for one class hour. The only requirement was that the purpose of the hour be to improve journal writing. Although these student classes had some bright spots (one group attempted to show how the music of a society at war reflected attitudes about war, from the "1812 Overture" to Sargeant Pepper), most were not clearly enough designed to improve writing (a South American boy told about cultural differences, which was interesting, and a good experience for him because he is not sure of his command of English, but not directly valuable for this course). They felt that they learned that they didn't know what to do with freedom when it was given to them; I learned that too much freedom is not freedom at all. They needed viable possibilities from which to select, and they didn't know what the possibilities were.

And so the semester ended. They wrote regularly and improved (I passed them all), they attended class and participated freely. They learned not to be afraid of writing; many said that it is now easier for them to write anything from letters to political science papers. But I don't think they believe that they really <u>learned</u> anything. The nearest to an understanding of the course came in an unsolicited critique:

"But the whole course, actually, was more of a good cathartic experience than a place to learn how to write. Which may be right for few of us will ever have to (or want to) seriously write, and all of us need to <u>be</u> persons." Close, but not quite my intention.

Next semester, to move the emphasis of intention from catharsis to an understanding of the nature of communication based on the nature of the meaningful world, I will try to get them to intellectuallize consciously the experience of writing and of the class; get them to think about the interrelation of form and content, about objective and existential truth, about surface and depth, about writing as objectification, about perspective in perception, all of which were contained within the experience of the first semester but never so named.

I've attached the last of the several class critiques from the author of the running-away-from-home piece used in the Freshman English Review and the horror of baldness. In some ways, it's probably the best piece to emerge from the entire semester.

THE END OF SOMETHING THAT NEVER BEGAN

This is my resignation of journal pretending. But before I begin on my last lines for Eng. 102R I have a few things to say.

First of all, why are there checks beside some passages in the journal that I made? The checks don't represent something that was reproduced for other eyes. The only thing I have to say, is maybe you quit and took a break and the check saved reliance on your memory. Secondly...someday I am going to write a "book" on what is wrong with every contemporary society. Maybe if people saw that they are living in a mess they might not take it so seriously or maybe throw the mess out.

Linda Thurston (Continued)
Thirdly, which is a more general thing, is the way people investigated and probed into the pieces that were presented in class. As if the "authors" were really trying to bring hidden points across. I remember that once in class you asked what people thought when I wrote the last line of Tim's sketch "And I can't wait for him." Some ridiculous imaginative answers were spoken. The fact is, as I was writing, Tim looked like he was going to take a lot of time, so I think I'll end it so people will think that Tim really had a hard time writing and it took him long. Really, he left while I was about half way through that! There were daily instances similar to the above.

Well, journal lovers all over America write your lovely happenings and thoughts with your pen or type and when age happens you can look back at your beautiful youth and cry your ass off. And see how you wasted your youth and worry your ass off. And remember the fun and bitch your ass off because your fun is done. Or publish it and cry, worry, and bitch your ass off because the critics are knocking your ass off. In fact, I'm silly myself for wasting my time writing my ass off and for what? What! What! What!

Well, it's like this. Writing is good for you. It helps build strong bodies 12 ways. It strengthens your finger muscles. It works your head so then you can have some aspirin. It uses ink so you can become a consumer. And, in the case of journal scratching, it records some of my events for later life, as if I want to remember. Do I want to remember what happened on October 24, 1967, or that I left home for a whole damn day, or when I was young I thought society was screwed up, or that I thought girls were easy, or that I had to get haircuts, or that on September 19, 1967, I was bored, or someday I finished reading a book, or I got drunk some night, or duing that year I wasn't driving my car, or that on my first day at UB I was forced into writing all this kind of garbage down. Leave me out of the past, man. I couldn't care less if I was killed by a truck when I was 8 just as long as I know that I'm here "now," Well, I predicted that I was going to cut down journals in my last "work of what" but I'm not up to it. So I'll leave the ideas and say one more thing about the class.

It was a drag. It wasn't your fault, it was ours. We expected something "neat" but it never occurred. We expected you to do it all and for us to sit on our ass and dig the happenings or expected the miracle of becoming a "genius" or turning on. The class was ours. It did nothing for our writing. I mean outside of class journal junk is what did it. The class was a bullshit session where nobody bullshitted. It was a formal class too. People weren't relaxed. They felt that when they talked something remarkable would float out of their mouth and that it would amaze us and we would walk over and give our deepest appreciation toward their brilliance and we would listen carefully every time the thoughts glided from their brain to ours. Instead, people were bored with other peoples' stupid remarks and cut the class enough without "Failure." I myself was disinterested about 200 per cent of the time. Many times I felt like saying things but the message would have insulted damn near everyone.

One thing was bad. The idea of what was nearest to oneself. What is nearest to one is farthest to most. People should write anything and really anything. I missed it, but if someone comes in and talks about fuck then the boundaries should disappear. Well, farewell journal class, I thought it would nev.....

Group C

Robert E. Fox

The past semester of English 101 is particularly difficult to assess, for a number of reasons. To begin with, it was my first real teaching experience, and therefore I have nothing with which to compare my performance, except a necessarily vague sense of what my colleagues have been doing. Secondly, the course I was teaching departed substantially (and in a good direction, I think) from Freshman English courses to which I had been previously exposed; and thirdly, the course itself seemed to undergo a mild sort of transformation during the semester. It would be fine if there were some form of calculus which would enable one to figure out quickly and accurately just how well one has done his job -- i.e., whether the course has been a success or a failure, or some combination of the two. However, not having any such tool at hand, I shall be forced to feel my way along in this critique.

If indeed the course was one in writing a journal, then I can state fairly unequivocally that it was unsuccessful. I am glad that this was the case. Much of the material I received from my students was dull as it was, and had they stuck to the journal form, either through choice or pressure, I am certain that the results would have been a good deal worse. The staff at large seems to have had a similar sense of the situation, since it decided partway through the semester to discard the "journal" designation and substitute something more encompassing. The journal concept was useful in reminding students that their writing was supposed to stem from personal experience, but the limitations of the journal form were hampering. Inspite of the freedom which I allowed and indeed tried to encourage, I did not get much experimentation -- but neither did many of the pieces sound like journal entries. Many of the papers I received read like stories, and this was fine, but at the same time I tried to indicate to some of my students that adhering strictly to formal structure was not always necessary by referring them to journal technique, which often employs fragments that do not have neat introductory paragraphs or conclusions. I tried to break down the tendency toward high school essays, toward formality, toward conventionality, both in our discussions on writing and in the conduct of the course. Of course, I was more successful with some students than with others. In general, I found that the students whose writing was most competent from the viewpoint of neatness, proper grammar, accurate spelling, etc., frequently did unexciting work. They could write well but could not engage a reader. On the other hand, some of the sloppiest papers I received, containing, either through carelessness (often the case) or ignorance, numerous errors of sentence structure, spelling, and the like, were usually interesting and stimulating. These papers looked awful on the page, but they read well aloud. The reason seemed to be that the students who wrote them were more concerned with writing naturally, colloquially. I usually looked forward to reading their papers. And I liked to bring their work before the class as a whole, because what I was trying to drum into their heads continually was that their writing should be natural, unstilted; that they should not worry about pleasing or shocking or alienating me. They should find something which truly engaged them about which to write, and then tackle it in the best way they knew how. They should feel free to experiment with form, and if they could handle one or more forms with facility, then they should continue to challenge themselves by turning constantly to new ones. During the course of semester, none of my students really attempted anything very unusual in the realm of form or even content, though some of them did play around with different dialogue techniques; indeed, I was rather pleased to discover that most of them handled dialogue fairly well.

I strove in piloting the course to improve the writing of my students by broadening their experience. I did this, first, by allowing the class to be a forum for useful discussion which did not necessarily have to deal with English. But for some time it appeared to be difficult for my students to make use of this freedom. This, I knew, was due to the fact that they were fresh from high school, and it is a far cry from the formal procedure there to the relaxed, open-ended atmosphere I tried to create. I began using a circle as a means of facilitating communication in class, but this did not seem to produce much better results than the ordinary arrangement.

Group C - Robert E. Fox (cont'd)
I had a class outdoors by the fountain one day when the weather was good, and this worked out rather well, as did the class which I held one evening at my apartment (which a large percentage of the class attended). These were experiments on my part to see how a change of physical situation would effect the class, and since I had favorable results, I plan to do more along these same lines next semester.

I also scheduled and held one series of conferences with each of my students about halfway through the term, which gave me an opportunity of giving them each some general idea of how I thought they were progressing overall, and which gave them a chance to respond without the barrier of an audience. I found that students who rarely or never spoke up in class who talk to me under these circumstances, and often they had worthwhile things to say. In such cases, I tried to alleviate whatever reluctances they may have had about participating in discussions in class, and I had some mild success in this regard. I think that these confererces were useful both for the students and for me, and I intend to schedule more of them next semester.

When something unusual or otherwise noteworthy was handed in, I mimeographed it and distributed it to the class for comment and criticism. But I found myself resorting rather often to material from other classes because the students in those classes, especially the 102 course, seemed to be more daring or capable in their approaches. I did not want to present these papers to my class to indicate that they were all idiots and that everyone else was doing splendidly; I did it because I wanted to show them a wider range of possibilities for their own writing. Occasionally, someone took the hint.

When I sensed that the class, as well as I, was bored by our usual material, I tried switching to other things temporarily. We discussed, for example, some contemporary song-lyrics as literature, and eventually read a novel, Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49. In both cases, this was a new experience for the students, but one which they generally found enjoyable and rewarding (according to the feedback I got). I constantly probed for suggestions from them for things they would like to do, but as usual, they left it up to my own ingenuity. They were rather cagey in this regard, being so insistent sometimes in their silence that they would trap me into speaking about myself and my own thoughts, as if in revenge for having revealed themselves in some degree to me. But in a way, this was good, because the better we all got to know one another, the better the communication became -- though we still had a long way to go when the term ended.

On the basis of my experiences this past semester, I think I am going to continue to vary the content of the course, but this time in a more controlled manner -- perhaps alternating periods of reading with those of writing, and hopefully some of the writing will stem from the reading undertaken. This way, since the students will not feel that they have to produce all the time, they may be more disposed to work when they are supposed to be writing, because one of my major disappointments in the course (apart from the fact that my students had so little to say) is that not enough writing was done, not to mention good writing. I think this was due to advantage which some students took of the pass-fail system in which all of them were pretty much assured of passing. This was also partly my own fault, because I should have done some more and forceful threatening -- but I hesitate to do this because I doubt that good work will result from pressure. But I think that second semester, following a suggestion made by Professor Stoehr, I am going to inform all of my students at the outset that they will assuredly be expected to make more than a token effort, and that anyone who believes himself to be unwilling or unable to do a healthy chunk of writing during the course of the term had better switch to another section. The only way they are going to learn about writing is to write, and if they are not writing but are expecting some species of revelation concerning how to write, they are wasting their time and mine.

All in all, I think I learned a good deal this semester about a number of things (as I hope my students did). Teaching, at least now, for me, is a kind of two-way street: I am trying to impart what I know, and at the same time, I feel that my knowledge is increasing in various ways along with my experience. I enjoy teaching

Group C - Robert E. Fox (cont'd)

very much, and am realizing the frustrations which are involved, as well as the gratifications. One of the reasons for this, I think, is the nature of the course itself, which, because of its flexibility, allows those of us who are teaching a good deal of freedom to pursue things which interest us and our students mutually, and to pursue these things in our own way. I should like to believe that my students (and I) not only know more about writing now than previously, but more, too, about life and experience within a university community and beyond.

I am including with this report two responses to my course which I received towards its conclusion:

I have learned alot in English class. Not only about English but also politics, music, people, etc. . . . My only complaint is with the class -- your students -- who make most classes a monologue. I think we could be learning so much more and it would be so much more interesting if more people would contribute. I know I'm at fault, too, but if more people talked I know I could talk more, too. I really like to join in discussions but when you get no reaction it's not satisfying. I know how you must feel. I don't think we're as dumb and shallow as we seem. Maybe this will change next semester when new kids come in. If not, I think you should force us to talk for a while. Ask individuals what their opinion is, or what they think, put them on the spot for a while. This is the only way I can think of.

I think that the informal class at your house was a really good idea. Reading the book was good too. Bill's suggestion about reading editorials, letters to the editor, etc., I think is worthwhile. I like to sit in a circle.

I'm sorry I haven't written anything lately. I guess I don't feel like expressing myself on paper because I paint but I haven't painted lately either. . . .

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Four months have passed and so have forty or fifty English classes. What have we learned? Are we now masters of the pen, ready to produce our life's works? Have we limited our learning to writing alone? Have those weekly writers learned anymore than the person who has turned in only one work?

To me, the original course and the present course are totally different. We have evolved from high school day, to life stories, to college experiences, to modern music, and to reading a different sort of novel. I feel I have learned as much if not more about myself from this approach than if I had read some dry novels and had papers and tests on them. We luckily have been totally away from this forced method of learning.

Our roundtable discussions on methods, modern music, contemporary novels, and life and college happenings have produced a more interesting, friendly, and meaningful concept in English. I feel that even though the writings decreased in number, the interest increased. The idea of moving class out of the classroom was also good. It further broke down the barrier of the student-teacher concept.

As one semester comes to an end, it is a shame that the class will become divided. This will mean another semester of trying to understand new people. The student-teacher barrier will again have to be broken, and things will again start at the writing level.

I have learned much more than writing in English 101. Many of the things we did, I would never have thought of doing on my own. I'm not a modern music fanatic, but our talks gave it a new light in my mind. The Crying of Lot 49 was a new and different kind of book to me, but how many of us would have read it on our own?

Even though the writing phase of 101 has not seemed to live up to its expectations, I feel that it has been a success in other areas that were not even considered in September. I'm looking forward to 102, and I hope it picks up where 101 left off and not where 101 began.

Group C — Madeline Gabrielson

English C102 D was a regular "C" course except for the fact that it was a second-semester class and therefore had to be taught on a one-semester basis. This fact had another result; the students had no choice as to what English they would

Group C - Madeline Gabrielson (cont'd)
take. They often resented the course, and saw no use in it.

The above may account in part for the inertia which was the prevailing quality of the class. The history of English C102 D has no real turning points; it is a long plateau with a few small peaks. I had thought it was a basic premise of the course that the students were to do most of the discussion in class. However, many times I was faced with a dead silence. If I tried to force the issue by calling on non-volunteers, they would admit to liking or disliking a paper, but would resent being asked why they felt that way. On a few occasions, I abandoned the effort to make them do the work, and explained why I thought a paper was worth discussing. I count these occasions as failures, especially since the students were rarely stimulated to agree or (which may have been better) to disagree. Another thing which surprised me was the choice of topics which my students made. I had expected an abundance of personal revelation, but they chose to write about factual matters, such as student nursing, deer-hunting trips, sporting events, and car accidents, and were not interested in self-probing. I once asked why they never wrote about their childhoods, and was told, "Who can remember back that far?"

Early in the term, I thought there was a direct connection between the quality of a paper and the amount of discussion that could be derived from it, but this wasn't so. The students often took the attitude, "Once you say it's good, what else can you say?" We did have a few intelligent, interested discussions, but I couldn't predict what papers would be an inspiration.

Student reaction to the course, both spoken and written, was profuse all through the term. Negative comments were more common, e.g., the course was a waste of time, the absence of a text was a mistake, my comments on their papers didn't help them to improve their writing and showed that I had missed the point, I pressed too hard for comments in class, and we tended to spend more time discussing a writer's character or technical knowledge (of hunting, for example) than his writing style. Related to the last complaint was the students' objection to using "opinion" papers in class. Some said that if such papers were discussed, we would talk only about the ideas, and not about the writing style. However, they seemed more at ease and participated more when we discussed attitudes rather than writing. Positive comments were that the course was "relaxing" (I felt this was a left-handed compliment, however) and that it helped us to learn about each other. I would agree with the last. One of the best things about the course was that we all thought of each other as human beings, not just as a group of students and an instructor, and I think this was the result of constantly reading and talking about each other. In spite of the students' impersonal choice of topics, they were interested in each other as people.

The students were nearly all opposed vehemently to the pass-fail system; at one point they even spoke of petitioning against it. Some wanted the chance to get a high mark because they needed to keep their averages up. Many felt that without the chance to get an A or B they had no incentive to work hard. One boy said that he didn't write as well as he could because he knew that even if he wrote better than mediocre papers the only mark he could get was "satisfactory." Only one boy admitted to liking the pass-fail system, saying that it took off the pressure. My own reaction is that although the old system of marks was far from good, it is hard to function without it. The students seem conditioned to needing the goad of grades.

I abolished all formal requirements, such as five pages per week, very early in the term. The students were told to write as much as they felt they could. Most felt they could write very little. Since I did not set up any guidelines for marking people, I felt I had to pass everyone at the end of the term, but at the same time I felt there were some it was wrong to pass.

I tried nothing unusual during the term. Once I asked the students to write down their reactions to the dittoed sheets, instead of coaxing them to say what they thought. I did this to prove that they all did have something to say, but I loaded the dice by making one of the dittoed sheets a critique of the course, which I knew by experience would get several comments. On another occasion, I gave an in-class essay. Some of the students resented this; two girls wrote essays about how much

Group C - Madeline Gabrielson

they disliked in-class essays. However, I liked the results, which provided discussion material for several days thereafter.

I gave the class the option of writing whatever they wanted, but most students preferred to stick to the journal format.

A new description of the course might include the fact that the journal format tends to break down after a while, and that various means are used to give variety, but this might be hard to explain accurately and specifically. It is my opinion that the course defies a complete description.

The group staff meetings are wonderful. They provide reassurance that other people have problems (although this is probably not their primary purpose) such as unresponsive students, and it is interesting and valuable to learn how other instructors are treating these problems. I would say that the effect of working in a group was to give me more confidence and security. I don't know if it had any direct result on my class, except for the indirect result that the students were always fascinated to hear anything I would tell them about the group meetings. I think they liked the idea that they, the freshmen, were being discussed; it was one of the things that made them feel like human beings, which was, as I have said, one of the best things about the course.

Group C Prudence Ward

For the first month of C101, most of the writing I received was simply anecdotal, depending on sensational subject matter to arouse interest among the other members of the class, and revealing very little self-awareness on the students' parts. The dittoed sheets which were used in class worked well as a medium for the sharing of experience, but because the students could rarely see beyond the immediate appeal of the content, we couldn't discuss writing per se very well at all.

The first major turning-point of the course occurred in October when students began to run out of exciting things to write about and, consequently, exciting things to say in class. After reaching a point of utter frustration on all our parts, the class as a group turned inward upon itself. I began having student conferences, and we spent several classes talking about the nature of the course. We spent a lot of time reacting to a spontaneous course critique written by one of my students, trying to discover just what a basically unstructured course could and could not do, and what to do about it. The main tenor of the class was aimed at creating a more relaxed atmosphere in which neither writing nor discussions would be regarded as a performance for others, but as a self-justified expression of one's own feelings -- perhaps an attempt again at defining the nature of the journal. In trying to instill an awareness of each other and of the group as a cohesive unit, the complaining itself probably achieved the most positive results.

By the end of October, most of the dialogue which had been used in the beginning in the telling of "dramatic encounters" was replaced by more introspective, analytical writing. We used fewer and fewer dittoed sheets, depending more on topics of general interest for class discussion and for providing the students with something to think about. As their writing became more "issue-oriented," they became sensitive to ways they could use their writing to convince a reader. Furthermore, they could also easily determine the tone of a paper, whether the writer was sincere, or how his handling of the subject could be improved. Our discussions could, at times, deal effectively with problems of form, of opening and closing sentences and internal coherency. From this point on, writing fell into two types: chronicles of specific events which had become meaningful of a larger theme in the mind of the writer, and informal, associative, moody ramblings in which the writer tried to solve some problem that he had encountered. This was due primarily to the relaxation and the self-confidence which naturally comes with the passage of time. Toward the end of the semester, the best students began to distinguish themselves from what had formerly been a homogeneous group. They were more experimental, more creative; description took on more importance, syntax broke down in the face of an interest and energy directed toward an immediate and accurate

Group C - Prudence Ward (cont'd)
recording of the writer's thoughts. When this writing was used in class, the discussions could again be oriented toward writing rather than just to issues, and could be conducted on a much higher level. The most exciting things happened when students verged on poetical prose or even pure poetry (albeit pretty bad poetry). No one, however, wrote any fiction -- or at least as far as I could determine.

II After Tahnksgiving I again had student conferences, and we talked mostly about the course. Except for a few cynics, most of the reactions were favorable. They enjoyed the small, informal classes and the few demands that were made on them because of the pass/fail system. Most of them were completely unable to take advantage of the freedom built into the course in any responsible way; with the heavy loads they carried in their majors, most of them admitted that they let English slide. They didn't seem to regret the abuses, however, since it was only freshman English anyway, and when would they ever be called upon to write again (a good half of my class were business, engineering, and nursing majors). Those who were planning to take humanities courses were troubled by the lack of "academic" English they were called upon to do, and when asked if they would like to do some reading, they were very enthusiastic. (I do plan to include a couple of novels and some short stories next semester). The less imaginative one wanted to read because it might provide them with "something to write about" and/or a respite from writing; the better ones because they felt that if they were forced to read for a course they would be able to catch up on neglected reading, neither of which, I admit, are very good reasons, but one can always hope for more.

III I think that the problems of the course are the most vital parts of C101. The process of taking an unstructured course rather than the end product, seems to have been the most valuable thing to freshmen. The crises, though unpleasant, and fairly unanticipated on my part, can be turned into a major advantage if the teacher knows what to expect and how to use it most effectively. An atmosphere of self-discovery is essential. Students have to feel that they've explored all possibilities before it genuinely occurs to them to turn to themselves. The feeling of "I'd rather do it myself" is necessary, although I probably could have been a better guide if I'd known more of what I was doing. As one student put it, the course really does depend "on the kids themselves." The hardest thing for me to learn was how to conduct a class discussion, and how to anticipate a new trend or to be sure that an old one was sufficiently apparent without driving it into the ground.

IV The emphasis on dramatic encounters in the course description is somewhat of a misnomer for the things I found myself trying to do. While it doesn't exclude the more reflective papers, it fails to insist upon self-awareness and depth of awareness which I found important to freshmen, and which I constantly had to re-emphasize. My students were only too willing to tell a little story every week and let it go at that. The most helpful indication of the progress of the course was given at the beginning of the term at staff meeting: that we would move from the general to the specific, and finally to the generally more significant. Also, my students are virtually incapable of doing a sustained piece of writing "worthy of a semester's effort." I don't think it acted as either a threat or a challenge, since most of them forgot about it.

V Staff meetings were excellent. They tended to degenerate at the end of the term, and as fewer people came, one had less of a feeling of knowing what was going on in other classes. If the larger groups were cut down, there would be less of a perspective, I think, and probably less interest in having them regularly.

Group C — Rosemary Whitener

My students and I never came to an agreement about whether our section of English was a success. Undoubtedly, most of them enjoyed reading each other's journals and talking about them; they often complained that their other courses at the university were, unlike English, too large and impersonal to give them a chance to get to know anyone. Fine: they chatted before class and had coffee together after class, sometimes even conferring with others about papers that they weren't

Group C - Rosemary Whitener (cont'd)
sure they wanted to turn in for for publication. But that didn't happen because it was a journal class. At least I hope it didn't. I hope it would happen in any class. The students got involved with each other and with the class because the group was relatively small and because their reactions to the material directed the discussions. Happy as I am with the friendships that developed, I am nonetheless disappointed that the actual journal-writing, for which I had such great and theoretical hopes, never happened. The history of how it didn't happen is so "circumstantial" that this report may be closer to a journal than anything the students turned in all semester.

To understand the tangle of theories with which I launched the first class session, you need a sketch of their origins. (I need a sketch of their origins. The class wasn't what I wanted it to be, yet the journal idea is still great as far as I'm concerned). My theories were a source of a lot of my floundering, and I need to know why I floundered.

At the beginning of last summer, before I knew I was going to come to Buffalo or to teach this section of English, I had begun keeping a journal. Like all journals, it contained a lot of garbage along with a few moments of insight, when I was able to be honest with myself. What excited me even last summer was rarely the writing itself, but more often seeing how knowing that I was going to write at the end of the day changed me. In times of stress I could keep a certain detachment; on the other hand, times when nothing seemed to be happening (bus rides, routine chores) gave rise to interesting and occasionally even to intense experiences, simply because I had gotten into the habit of looking for things to write about. I wanted my students to make this discovery of the present, and I thought that journal class could push them toward it. A second strand of theorizing, however, so obscured the nature of the journal that we got lost in the question of what and how the students should write.

I just about guaranteed the impossibility of answering the question of what a journal is by incorporating into my first day's lecture a train of reasoning that went something like this: a journal shows what you think right now; the way that you write your journal shows what you think right now; therefore, write about anything: whatever you produce will be a journal entry. Can you imagine the confusion at this point in the lecture? It wouldn't have been irreparable had I not turned the class toward the type of writing that really belongs in the realm of autobiography by telling the students that when they got stuck for a subject they could always recount their childhood memories. My ideas about why the "a journal shows what you think right now" and "write about childhood if you get stuck for a subject" suggestions were tactical blunders on my part are rather vague, but I think it's important to the quest for True Journal that I at least try to clarify them.

I didn't realize until I began re-thinking the course for this report that what I had done was to offer both a frightening challenge and a possibility of dignified retreat. I shouldn't have told the students so blandly that, whatever they wrote and however they wrote it, self-revelation would result from their writing and was both inevitable and desirable. I now believe that personal identity is the primary concern in autobiography, but that in journal the concern should be first of all with recent experience. Self-discovery is of course implicit in journal-keeping, as it is in all writing, but I shouldn't have told the class that. One boy picked up the idea and never let go of it -- he was careful to make his papers non-controversial and impersonal all semester and label them "not for publication" until the very last week of the semester. Then he removed the "not for publication." Another boy, a much better writer, showed me the pitfalls of the childhood "out" that I had unwittingly offered.

Gaston Bachelard's Poetique de la Reverie, which I read during the semester break, pointed out for me just how closed a world childhood is. As we all know, it's a fine source for the artist -- but what about the journal-writer? I think that there is a tendency to write about childhood simply in order to justify what one is now and to avoid facing issues that are important now. What I saw in the good writer mentioned above seems to support the idea that writing about memory as an end in itself can work against what the journal at its best can do. My only consistent

Group C - Rosemary Whitener (cont'd)
childhood-memory writer, this student got very angry when we talked about Viet Nam. He could justify neither our being there nor our taking the responsibility for the chaos that he thought would result from our leaving. He had an open mind and he didn't want it disturbed, to the point of being unwilling to listen to arguments on either side. When he wrote about the war, he wrote allegorically; when he wrote about his childhood he wrote fantasy most of the time, and beautiful fantasy at that. His light- and water-filled landscapes entranced me. Two of his papers strongly reminded me of different spots in Wordsworth's Prelude, which he hadn't read; all of his papers invited archetypal interpretation. This student, an engineering major, is fantastically aware of how beautiful and frightening the overall pattern of human life can be. But he never decided anything about the present. The one time that he wrote about college life, I didn't ditto up his paper, which was artistically not as exciting as his others, and not as honest as what other people were doing with their daily lives. I'm kicking myself all over the place for that one. He returned to fantasy.

Back to first-lecture theories. A major weakness of the ideas that I've presented so far is that they have to do with what happens outside the classroom: I didn't know what I wanted to do with class discussions. I still don't know what I'm going to do with them this semester. I'm unsatisfied with the way I handled our talks about the papers last semester, which was to suggest a few criticisms of the dittoed papers and to praise some good points and then to let the class take it from there. Or to urge them to take it from there. Of course, they had little to say about a writer's style, so our only good discussions took place when they were in a mood to relate the content of a paper to their own experiences or to argue with the ideas that we drew out of the content. Although I enjoyed the discussions as much as they did, I was dissatisfied because we never had anything definitive to say about a paper and lacked any impetus to carry us from session to session.

At the first of the semester I established some sense of continuity for myself, if not for the students, by keeping a notebook. Everybody had a page with summaries of his papers and of my comments, as well as a checkmark to tell me which papers had been dittoed and talked about in class, the idea behind the checkmarks being that by mid semester I hoped to have used at least one paper from every student, regardless of whether it was better than other papers that I didn't use. An unexpected use of the notebook was that it made me more aware of some of the students' problems than they were. I avoided forcing issues with them, though. For example, I was puzzled that a bitter and unthinking denunciation of anti-war demonstrators (and therefore an unthinking support of the war and all that that implies) came from the student who had written a tender portrait of T.J. White, a small boy who died of cancer. When he told me that he'd just gotten back from Viet Nam, I didn't push the issue. On his own, by the end of the semester, he came to the realization that the war had changed the way he looked at things, which he hadn't admitted earlier. The recognition that he had changed came in a "not for publication" paper about combat that he almost agreed to share with the class. I typed it up, but right before class he changed his mind. Maybe it's just as well that he did. I don't know what we would have done with it. Everyone in the class knew that he lost his equilibrium about the war because of the war, and when the subject came up, a few people who I know disagreed with him could always be counted on to side with him and calm him down. While I am digressing, I want to say that I feel phenomenally lucky in the people I chanced to get: not only were there enough good writers, to keep us going, but there was an abundance of "good" people who were interested in talking to each other. Because it was a fairly mature group, any antagonism that came up was tempered by an underlying respect that really made the class what it was. Not everyone got involved personally with other people in the class, yet attendance was consistently good, even on the part of those who didn't talk a lot. I really don't know why. Only two people stayed away: one said he was bored with student papers and wanted to read literature (but he never came to see me about what he wanted to do on his own to justify getting credit for the course); the other claimed that he just couldn't make a nine o'clock class. Both wrote only one paper. If I hadn't

Group C - Rosemary Whitener (cont'd)
been so preoccupied with finding a direction that would convince me that something worthwhile was happening to the people who did write, I would have pressured them into writing more, if not into coming more often. Unfortunately, I lost the notebook, and that ended any pretense of requiring a certain number of papers.

So much for my theories. I may be able to make more sense out of them after the end of this coming semester. As for the history of the class that we were asked to write, I'm not sure that what I have to say will be helpful to other journal teachers or even to me because the particular personalities involved (my own included, of course) had more influence on what happened that did the ideas.

As I look back over the semester, five periods stand out. The first was one of awkward or patently inappropriate writing: essays were soon disposed of, but inflated trivialities stayed with us for awhile. Late in September I held individual conferences in Cooke, which eased us into the second period and which may have contributed to a change in the writing. I'm not sure, though, that the conferences shouldn't have come later in the semester. The two people who seemed to me to have the most to write about in terms of colorful past experiences apparently were satisfied with what they told me about themselves when we talked. I didn't get the papers I expected from the boy who had moved to New York from Israel when he was twelve and unable to speak a word of English, or from the girl who had spent several summers with her mother's family in Spain. Papers from other students, however, tended to focus more than they had before the conferences on what was going on in their lives that fall; moreover, the writers no longer strove for more effect than the events merited in many cases, although some people never stopped trying too hard. A lot of papers were labeled "not for publication," but they still represented some kind of a breakthrough for me. I think that this was the time of most intense involvement with our classes for all of us who were teaching. As Linda Thurston remarked one afternoon, conversation in Cooke never stopped. It was rarely about the classes we were taking.

The third period was war time. The Washington Peace March was a natural topic for discussion and for papers. Nothing was decided, of course. About the time that everything had been said on that subject, two students began submitting fiction that was well worth looking at. During this period, discussions were at their best as far as I was concerned: I feel more confident dealing with fiction than with whatever a journal is, simply because I've had more experience in that line. The two fiction writers wanted criticism and took it very well, partly because the work was more detached from their personal concerns than the other writing had been. Their interest in criticism influenced the class, who no longer wanted to keep authorship anonymous. It must have been because discussion focused on what the writers were doing and never on what they were. We had not tried to analyze the anonymous author before this period, but had come close, I think: one student told me several times that he didn't like the idea of being "torn apart" in class.

The last period was my own alienation from the class. It was a shock to me to return from Thanksgiving vacation and to block on one student's name the first session back. I began to get more involved in my own classwork and in the war question than I had been previously, and that lessened the intensity of my involvement with the class. Attendance stayed high until the last week of the semester and the papers kept coming, but by this time I had the feeling that I had failed the class. My great conclusion was to type the papers for the last day on the wrong side of the ditto sheet. Somehow it fit. The first day I had lectured for fifteen or twenty minutes about journals, memoires, autobiographies, and essays and how great the course I had chosen to teach and they had chosen to take was going to be, only to find out that they hadn't chosen it and had wondered politely during the whole lecture whether they were in the right room.

Group C — Robert Rohrer

After the first day of classes I traded sections with Lloyd Michaels; upon reading my new group's first journal entries, I found that all but one of the

Group C - Robert Rohrer (cont'd)
students were on the right track -- i.e., were writing about actual experiences and not doing essays. The one student who did not have the right idea dropped out of my section after the second day, so I was left with a class full of people who had started well. None of these approached illiteracy, one was a very good writer, and others displayed individual promising qualities (e.g., vivid descriptive imagery); I was blessed at the outset with an intelligent group of students reasonably interested in what they were doing.

One element lacking in the first round of papers was dialogue; only one or two students used dialogue, and they employed it sparingly. In an attempt to remedy this shortcoming as soon as possible, I told everyone at our third or fourth meeting to go out and transcribe as literally as possible some conversation they took part in or overheard in the next couple of days. After they had done this, and I had passed out copies of some of the results, dialogue came into general use in most of the entries that followed. Some students drifted back to pure narrative, and others began to turn in nothing but dialogue (in one case with fairly interesting fictional experiments), but these extremes balanced out as the semester progressed.

One side-effect of the dialogue exercise was the introduction of profanity into the students' writing. One student rendered literally a conversation riddled with four-letter words commonly used by collegians; the class as a whole was delighted with the discovery that I would allow them to write this way, and used profanity as frequently as possible. This phenomenon was beneficial in that many of the students began to write in more natural, relaxed styles (the best writer adopted an effectively colloquial narrative tone); however, in at least one case -- the case of the boy who wrote the dialogue mentioned above, in fact -- the "new freedom" led to a rather stilted style, artificially saturated with profanity. I believe that the general relaxation resulted in an overall tendency towards sensationalism in the students' choice of subject-matter; attempted rapes, homosexuality, more average sexual exploits, and murder became some of the favorite subjects, although not the class norm. Some of these papers were admittedly fabrications or fictionalized elaborations on actual situations.

In general, the students themselves made the class "go"; with each new round of journal entries I usually found some paper that was original in approach or content. The students were continually experimenting with various writing techniques. One began making commentaries on society through fictional dialogues (on the war, bigotry, etc.); two others experimented with photographic description, effectively in some cases; a nursing student, not generally one of the best writers, began using symbolism; and so forth. My main activity in the course of the semester was to ditto the papers up, go to class, and find out whether the other students understood the interesting things their classmates were doing.

There was a marked deterioration in attendance as the semester moved on; this loss of interest in the class itself was not reflected in the writing, although in several individual cases entries became less and less frequent. In the first weeks of the semester I concentrated almost exclusively on the technical aspects of the writing; often two or three papers would exhibit similar traits, and I would present them to the class as a "set." Although the class was always reasonably responsive, I soon found that I did not have the ability to fill the entire fifty minutes talking about the technical aspects of the papers (form and style, unconscious though they usually were), and few of my sessions broke the forty minute mark. This pattern made me uncomfortable at first, but I was encouraged by the quality of the writing that was coming in and decided that the brevity of my classes was not harming the students' progress or productivity, and that letting each class die a natural death was preferable to prolonging it artificially (with long periods of silence, for example).

In mid-semester I felt the need to alter my approach to the papers altogether; to encourage interpretation of content in class. My aims in doing this were first, hopefully to add the dimension of thoughtful understanding to papers themselves, which, although interesting in their experimentalism, were shallow from an interpretive standpoint; and, second, to provide a fresh source for classroom discussion.

Group C - Robert Rohrer (cont'd)
As soon as I adopted this approach, the classes themselves became longer, averaging between 45 and 50 minutes; and the discussions became livelier, and for me more interesting. Towards the end of the semester, however, I discovered that the students found speculation as to what the author's attitude was towards his subject, what a given incident meant in abstract terms, etc., largely pointless; in fact, they asked for a return to observations on style and form on my part, saying they found such observations more helpful. Whether they hoped for a corresponding reduction in the amount of time spent in class is open to question. At least one reason for the decline in class attendance was brought out in one of the franker critiques of the course written by the students at my request late in the semester:

> ...Basically the course was very boring....It's just that the type of course this was was very limited whereas you couldn't make much variety in the way you taught it even if you wanted to. In the beginning of the semester I thought it was interesting to read other people's works because they were good and not much criticizing was done....I think, though, towards the middle of the semester that they didn't have to come to class. They wouldn't be missing anything more than reading a few papers..."

Although personal relations between the class and me were good, this girl and others felt there was little content in the course beyond the actual writing. Upon analyzing this feeling, I find that it is largely a reflection of my own attitude towards the course: I myself was interested in the students' writing more as manifestations of the writers' personalities than as examples of good or bad writing. My interest in the course was high throughout the semester partially because most of the students were telling interesting stories, and partially because even the worst writing usually provided direct or indirect insights into the nature of the writer. This kind of interest is not really viable in the classroom except in its superficial manifestations -- moral attitudes, stylistic habits, etc. Since my interest in what I brought up as discussion topics during class time was peripheral to my central interests, the students' reaction to classroom discussion as being pointless and dull is a logical consequence. In class, as well, I was interested in what the students said more as manifestations of personality than as comments on the writing at hand.

Another possible reason for the decline in class attendance was that I fell behind rather badly in making comments on papers and returning them, in the last four weeks of the semester. Basically, I had run out of technical advice and was incapable of following through on paper with my mid-semester alteration of classroom approach. Everyone seemed to be doing well without my "guidance," and I was at a loss as to where to direct them. Although I never tired of reading the entries, I was drained of any ingenuity I had brought to conducting the course during the first half of the semester, and had myself lost a sense of direction. This problem could not help being reflected in the class itself -- although, interestingly, it did not cause deterioration of the writing that was turned in.

In only three cases did writing improve significantly after the first few weeks of class: one student, after many dull and grammatically clumsy entries, began to display a measure of sensitivity and to impose some control on his disordered constructions; another achieved competence in using narrative and dialogue together to tell a story. The nursing student previously mentioned made the most surprising and gratifying improvement; she progressed from dull writing on uninteresting subjects through experiments in dialogue and sound effects that were interesting but meaningless, to three insightful papers near the end of the semester on (1) an aspect of her childhood, (2) a hospital experience, and (3) her present-day relationship with her family. All of these were much better-written than any of her earlier efforts. Throughout the semester she periodically exhibited a symbolic turn of mind, but did not greatly extend this tendency.

To summarize the semester: I derived a great deal from the course personally and enjoyed meeting classes; to judge from the work turned in, many of the students enjoyed writing, and many found effective "voices" -- styles, forms. However, very little changed after the first few weeks of the semester. Papers generally became longer, but only those students noted above actually improved. Interesting work

Group C - Robert Rohrer (cont'd)
continued to come in, but no really new directions were taken. This lack of development is largely my own fault; although I did not fully realize the fact while the semester was actually in progress, I now see that I did not know what to push the class toward after their initial achievement. The course drifted after it reached the halfway mark -- possibly even before then; I was able to convince myself that it was actually going somewhere because I was pleased with the quality of the writing coming in -- i.e., with the status quo. I would say that the class succeeded in writing well, but that it succeeded largely through its inherent ability.

As for staff meetings, I found the discussions both valuable and reassuring. I profited from others' analyses of problems similar to those I was having, and was able to maintain my own morale at a healthy level simply because I knew I was not the only graduate assistant having such difficulties. I also appropriated some of the ideas brought up during the meetings for use in my own section.

Group C — Michael Aldrich

My course began as a journal-writing course patterned after those I taught last year and this summer: students wrote journals about their own experiences and I looked for (a) anything interesting, (b) stories, "dramatic encounters," and (c) articulation of perceptual changes in student awareness of the world.

Things went well for about six weeks, then the "Excerpts" from their journals began to pall; very little that interested them or me came in. About two months into the semester, I had to change something or lose class interest entirely. So I began devoting maybe one day a week to journals, selecting only the very best, and otherwise doing miscellaneous and sundry, including assignments of poetry and some extraneous lectures. This was about the time of my closest involvement with a local motorcycle club, and for a couple weeks my class was treated to funeral reports. I couldn't have done anything else.

Several journals about drugs had come in so I asked the kids if they wanted to have a week of seminars on drugs. This stirred them up a bit and 5 or 6 students actually went out and did research. We had two different student panels on drugs -- that I stayed out of entirely -- and about two weeks of discussions.

By the end of the term everyone had written clearly enough journals. Many poems came in too, and an occasional short-short story. I went through a week or so discussing creative writing from a technical point of view.

Two administrative difficulties: (1) Students who wanted to sign up for my section again second term were told that it was closed, long before pre-registration was over. I get around this simply by accepting anyone who wants to come to my class as students, giving their grade to whatever teacher they're supposed to have. My classes tend to swell to about 30 or 35 by the end of each term. (2) GRADING: there were 8 students in my class who earned and deserved A's, and who needed those A's figured into their cumulative average. (For sports qualification or just to bring up low grades in other subjects). Consequently when grade cards came, I gave them the A's they'd earned, and passed or failed other students. But the computer managed to scramble the A's into "satisfactory." That is a drag for those kids.

This term, instead of just journal-writing, I am going into Ken Kesey's <u>One Flew Over</u>, and Beckett's <u>Waiting for Godot</u>. Have been having a ball: guest lectures from people who've worked in asylums, good discussions about the Kesey book. This week I've started them into theatre, preparatory to <u>Godot</u>, by demonstrating (and talking about) motion as meaningful "language." A couple DA majors have been coming in and taking the class through warm-up exercises (pantomime, mirror-imitations between 2 kids).

I feel that I've loosened this term's class up more in two weeks than I was able to do all last term with that class. Therefore I think that having something else to do <u>with</u> journals, partly in place of them, has helped me teach them more.

Group C Taylor Stoehr

Like other sections in this group, my class was immediately set to writing about experience, in a journal format, entries to be handed in at the approximate rate of five pages a week. I planned to ditto and discuss the best work handed in each day, and to focus attention on whatever particular writing problems turned up. Although I hoped classes would be interesting and sometimes even enlightening, I expected that a few good dittoed papers would provide the crucial impetus, to be measured in still more good writing by other students. I saw my chief function as that of initial audience, responding seriously and in some detail to each paper as soon as it was handed in; I expected to relinquish as much of this role as possible when the students began to know and respect each other's abilities, so that they might provide a more authentic audience than I could be.

One student immediately announced himself as "special," with much fanfare about his "works in progress" and (feigned or real) ambivalence about handing them in. His work, as it turned out, was almost totally out of his control, although it did now and then show signs of intelligence. Partly as a dodge (I now think), he began quite early to complain about the "class format." His point was a good one, for I did somewhat overcontrol the direction of discussion, and allowed myself to be identified in the usual teacher's role, as the one who talks while the students listen. For the moment, however, I ignored both his motives and his point, in order to use the opportunity to generate some new classroom tension, to allow students to "line up" if they wished. There was little or no response to this bait -- perhaps because I was too obviously eager for their reaction. Discussions were rarely more than ordinary, though attendance seemed fairly steady. I then began to work a little harder to bring the silent parts of the class into active participation. The girls, mostly nurses, responded with extreme reluctance; most of the boys were willing enough to talk once they had got their feet wet, and even the four or five football players engaged in discussions energetically. But the "spontaneity" that was the object of these manœuvers failed to develop.

During all this time the writing remained dull and inarticulate. Each day, nonetheless, I picked out the best of the crop for discussion. (Perhaps the dreariness of the papers might account for the failure of the class to "take over" in discussion; frankly, I doubt it. Two symptoms of a deeper problem). Finally one girl began to develop as the single talented writer. During the middle stretch of the semester, she wrote three good papers, the first two about childhood experiences, the third about a more recent encounter. Each of these provoked argument when discussed in class, but no one took fire from her. Had she been one of the livelier talkers in class, we might have had more people emulating her, but she continued virtually mute through it all, even when her papers were under attack. Since I was the most prominent admirer of her work, there was reluctance to accept her papers as anything more than another pedagogical device imposed on the class. Generally the students were a harsh audience for each other, and as a group they demonstrated little taste or curiosity. Something that happened quite early in the year -- I don't know what -- must have set the stage for these doldrums.

Midway in the semester the class turned its attention to a paper (written in another section of Group C) that criticized the course for pretending to a spontaneity and voluntarism that in fact it lacked. The class, although not really prepared either to attack or to defend such a view of the course, ultimately agreed that <u>something</u> was operating to limit their commitment. They decided:

(1) to drop the pretense of "journal-writing," and recognize that their papers were papers -- albeit about personal experience;

(2) to conduct class in a circular sitting arrangement;

(3) to make writing assignments self-imposed (again, essentially a matter of dropping a pretense, though the students didn't see it that way).

At first it seemed that a few students might be energized to some serious writing by this "re-dedication." Class discussions were somewhat enlivened (though I doubt that the "circle" had much to do with it), and remained so through the semester. But the writing showed no signs of interest or even uncomfortableness. The single exception was the emergence of a second talent -- another silent girl --

Group C - Taylor Stoehr (cont'd)
but only for two papers. For the rest, while the quality of the writing remained at a steady level of mediocrity, the quantity now reached a new low -- of approximately six papers a week from the entire class -- that is, an average of one paper a month from each student. Still, I was willing to be patient a little longer, hoping that a few students might benefit from the opportunity to come to terms with themselves, uncoerced. I now think I was foolish to hope, given the history of the course up to this point. My own discouragement must have shown through clearly enough, and my patience was unnatural in the circumstances, and too tinged with spite to be effective.

One final spurt of interest came about four weeks from the end of the semester, when we devoted an hour to the repeated reading aloud of a paper by its author, in an effort to demonstrate the necessity for a writer to employ a voice of genuine address to some reader. The student found she could not say her sentences to anyone in the room without tonal difficulty and embarrassment. Somehow this exercise hit home in a way that nothing else all semester had, and (as I then thought and later confirmed) many students left class that day determined to try writing in their "natural" speaking voices. However, nothing concrete came of this determination, whether because of the habits of laziness and indifference already established, or the pressure of end-of-the-semester work in other courses.

Students maintained in the end that they had indeed learned something about writing, even though they had produced little. They were vague about the nature of this lesson, but probably it was a negative discovery: if a writer has no compelling reason to address an audience, he is unlikely to create anything very interesting or substantial. A further, more personal lesson might be implied: these students were unused to freedom and responsibility in education, and could not rise to the occasion when allowed to choose their own pace and follow their own concerns. Some students attributed their difficulties to the pass/fail system of grading, but most understood that this excuse merely emphasized their inability to be responsible for themselves. Whether this discouraging lesson is worth a semester's time and energy it is hard to say. It depends on the force of the discovery, probably in this case not sufficient to effect any changes.

If I had it to do over again, I would begin by paying much closer attention to individual student papers, in an effort to get at least four of five students producing good work in the early weeks. This would make a big difference in morale. My mistake last semester was to suppose that the class could be "communitized" as an audience before any individual students had earned the right to be heard as writers. The mere existence of an audience does not guarantee that there will be a writer to address it. In last semester's case the continual emphasis on the class as a self-conscious audience may even have intimidated some students.

I still believe that, especially in a pass/fail system, the best way to encourage writing is not to make assignments or requirements for the whole class, but rather to ask individual students for particular things. Without the goad of grades, class assignments are often ignored, but special requests or demands from the teacher are almost invariably honored. I should have realized this much earlier than I did. I also took too long to discover that the freedom of subject matter offered the student needs to be qualified by more than the teacher's approval or disapproval of each paper turned in. As soon as something the least bit promising is written, the student should be required to stick with it until he has substantially improved it. At the outset the fastest way to get a few good papers is to concentrate on revision, asking each student to rewrite his first effort again and again. Moreover, the force of the teacher's comments on any paper is always intensified by prefacing them with the instruction "rewrite this." Without such focusing, students have a tendency merely to translate advice into grades, while the teacher may find himself unable to break out of the crude terminology of "good" and "bad."

Group C Marlene Longenecker

In writing this report, I feel like one of my students. English C101 was an "experience," and this is an attempt to evaluate an experience in writing. The "evaluation" is the hard part. But, in thinking about "what to write" (the student's first big question), it has (rather self-consciously) occurred to me that I ought to begin where I asked the students to begin: by telling the reader "what happened."

I began teaching English C101 with several pre-conceived notions of how to go about it. Like the rest of our teaching group, I have been committed to the possibility of change in both method and purpose. But my major conviction remains the same: teaching writing involves teaching something about how language works. I have tried to convince my students that writing (and particularly journal writing) is a process of self-definition, that language is a way of structuring a world view, and that there is an important relationship between language and self, between words and the world. I have attempted to make the students aware not only of the words they use, but of why they use them. I wanted them to think about thinking as well as about writing. In an undoubtedly simplistic but hopefully meaningful way, I tried to get them to explore the complex inter-relationships between actions and language; between perception and communication. And in judging the students' work, I was interested not only in the quality of the writing produced, but also in the amount of awareness that engendered and was hopefully reflected in that writing.

Those were my initial conceptions about the course. Within this "teacher-imposed" framework, however, I wanted very much to make it clear that the course existed <u>for</u> the students, that they could make of it what they wanted. I found that the students' conceptions of the purpose of the course often seemed somewhat different from mine. I'm not so sure that what seemed an essential difference was not merely a superficial one, but since I did ask them to define their own course, I must, to some degree, allow them to speak for themselves in the matter of course evaluation. The end must be seen in terms of both my beginning and the students' beginnings. But in between, a lot of things happened.

I can divide the history of the course into about four stages. These stages are of course somewhat more clearly defined in retrospect, but they were also quite apparent during the course of the semester.

In the first stage, which lasted about two weeks, I was mainly concerned with breaking high school habits. The first papers I received were all very nice "essays" characterized by lack of detail, lack of action, lack of a point of view, lack of clarity, and lack of feeling. I realized that, with a few exceptions, no matter how "real" the original experience had been, their writing about it was not real. It lacked life. So we spent the first two weeks talking about clarity, about the necessity for detail in description, about the nature of the first person voice, and about "reporting" vs. description, description vs. narrative, narration vs dramatization, etc. The students got the point of all this much faster that I expected, and the papers improved about 100% in the first two weeks.

The second stage (about three or four weeks long) was not a great deal different from the first. I continued to make the same points about mechanics, but I also emphasized my plea that the students view their writing as a <u>part</u> of their response to something, not merely as a description of that response. This, somehow, led to a long series of discussions about "TONE," a concept which I found even more difficult to teach than I had expected, and I had expected it would be impossible. It was--almost. We talked about "intensity" and "understatement," but very little of it had any real meaning for them at this point. In fact, I'm not sure it ever did. But talking about tone and meaning and about how meaning is perceived in, around, and within words helped a great deal in getting the students to <u>think</u> about language. I realized this when the papers became more self-reflexive and the students, more aware of the "experience" of writing.

Group C (Marlene Longenecker - Continued)

Partly because several of the students began writing "satire," and partly because it was inevitable, the discussions of tone led to discussions about irony. In this case, I was lucky. I got the perfect paper--a very bad satire which was almost very good except that one could not tell for sure that it was satire. Half the class thought it was, and the other half thought it wasn't. So I was able to make my point about both tone and irony, and I was able to get the class to pin-point exactly why and where the paper did or did not work. It was the first paper they really analyzed closely, and I think it was the first one that really did them any good beyond just serving as an example of what the teacher wanted. That was a big step forward. Since that time, the students have, in most cases, been able to make some kind of constructive use of the papers. Often this has been more in the form of subtle and almost unconscious imitation, rather than class discussion, but the examples used in class have continued to have some productive effect.

In the midst of this, in about the fifth week of school, I got an entire set of papers devoted to "issues"--mostly political or social, mainly about the war. I then spent a week or so trying to discuss how one should write effectively about things like "basic beliefs" and about political or social or just plain "human" issues. I found, however, that they were really much more interested in talking about the issues themselves than about the writing. I then became aware of what has since become quite obvious, namely, that the students saw this course as a great deal more than a writing course. It was becoming, for them, an extension of a dorm or Rathskeller "bull" session (or at least "think" session, for those who did not talk). This set of "issue-papers" and the occurrence of the Washington Peace March set off about a week and a half of social-political debates, in which I took practically no part. (I spent my time keeping them from clobbering each other, which they very nearly did several times.) The students talked to (or at least at) each other, and it lasted until everyone had had his or her say. It was a good thing, because afterwards, they all knew each other and they knew more about me--but most importantly, because they had wanted it to happen. I had been receiving notes about it in their papers. E.g.: "Teach. . . how about let's bullshit in class a little? Let us listen to the absurd statements made by our compatriots and let us match them. One such session can be more valuable than reading any ten books." So I let them.

This, of course, was all in keeping with what I had wanted the course to become, namely, important to them. I think it did then, and remained so from then on. I was not, at first, quite as aware of the value of this as I am now. I was a bit too concerned about the fact that the course showed signs of moving away from a writing course. However, it was just about this time that Mike Greene coined the phrase "sharing experiences," and I realized that that was exactly what was happening.

That week and a half of heated debate, during which they all had a lot at stake and were willing to test ideas, was an intense experience for me and especially for them. It opened the doors to the third stage, which was the most important one because it set the students free to write and to think in their own way. This stage set the tone of the course for the remainder of the semester.

It began around the first of November. At this point, nearly all of the students began to write about what they were really interested in--themselves. They began to write what they wanted to write. For about a third of them, this simple meant a continuation, at first, of their semi-fictionalized reporting about semi-significant experiences, without much reflection or feeling imvolved. The majority, however, broke away from their detached, essay-writing

Group C (Marlene Longenecker - Continued)
tone, and they started to write about themselves in really meaningful ways. They started slowly at first, with maybe one "revelation" paragraph attached to an otherwise ordinary paper. But when they got some response from me on that one paragraph, they expanded on it quickly. The papers became real experiences for them. They started connecting past with present, trying to define themselves and their place in the world. Many of the papers were quite personal and had a sense of immediacy and spontaneity that revealed a definite need to write. This need to write, in turn, improved their writing because they were writing about things real and close to them. Often these papers would contain comments like, "I don't know why I'm telling you this, but I felt like writing about it," or "I know this sounds like a letter to Ann Landers, but it's been bothering me and I wanted to get it off my chest. I figured this was the best way."

In this stage there occurred a complete division of forms among the students. Each one began to develop his own voice and style, and I was able to respond accordingly. It was at this point that all of the students became distinct individuals to me, and I was able to get a sense of their own intentions. I also became more fully aware of each one's individual potential. It became clear to me which ones were really beginning to benefit from their writing. Those I let go on their own. They knew, by then, what they wanted. I used some of their papers in class for the benefit of those who were still stuck in the high school essay trap, and most of the latter were able eventually to break through the detachment barrier and open up.

So, at this point I had about four people writing almost straight fiction, two who were determined to be James Joyce, one who set out to write the whole (incredible) history of his life from his junior year in high school on (he's still working on it), one student who was keeping a real genuine journal (almost verging on a diary) which he turned in to me periodically, and a couple of students who were writing poetry. The rest, for the most part, were writing increasingly good, meaningful, and thoughtful accounts of present and past experiences. In addition, of course, there were two who wrote volumes and never made any progress at all (after the first week), two who came to class every day, talked a lot, and never wrote anything, and two who neither came to class nor wrote anything. And that's about how it remained until the end. Once they had determined the most effective way of saying what they had to say, most of the students maintained a fairly specific form, tone, and style for the rest of the semester. The only real changes were generally the kind that went further in the same direction. I did not, in most cases, encourage them to depart from this usual style, from what came natural to them. I think next semester I will try to get at least the best writers to try different forms. In some cases, I should have done this already because I noticed toward the end that among some of them, what had begun as a natural way of expressing themselves was beginning to get rather "artistic." They were, in some cases, simply developing their style. But in other cases, they were moving toward quote-creative-writing-unquote, which is not, I think, what they really wanted. This happened only at the very end, however, and for several weeks I was getting a number of very fine papers from some of the students.

It was not all that nice, however. This division of forms resulted in THE BIG PROBLEM, for which I as yet have no solution. That is that the classroom situation deteriorated. When I had nice, detached, every-day boy scout experiences to use in class, they had no trouble talking about the papers. They could criticize the form and relate (in a similarly detached way) to the content. But as soon as I reproduced something that went a bit below the surface, that revealed something about its author, they backed off like scared

Group C (Marlene Longenecker - Continued)
rabbits. A paper describing what was obviously a universal feeling or emotion, even though attached to a specific situation, proved to be the paper about which they refused to say anything. I was faced with the fact that, while I had finally made them aware that writing can be closely related to experience, I was now unable to re-create that close relationship in the class room. The more subjective a paper was, the more they treated it like an object. They were left with nothing to say.

This was partly, I think, inevitable. Freshmen are quite willing to talk about pleasing or past experiences, but they are not quite ready to talk about "pleasure" or "memory." But it was also partly my fault. For one thing, I maintained the anonymity of the papers (until the last couple of weeks when I realized that this was part of the problem) so that while they knew each other fairly well, they did not know each other's writing. By having them read an anonymous paper which closely reflected something of its author, I was, in a sense, <u>forcing</u> them to treat it objectively. In such a situation, they wanted to know who they were talking about. I should have realized this a lot sooner than I did. Another mistake I made was in getting them away from a strictly impressionistic <u>response</u> and moving them toward a more objective <u>criticism</u> based on intention and the form/content problems. I was trying, I guess, to make literary critics out of them, without realizing what I was doing. They seemed to have the feeling that the statement, "I like it because it means something to me," was not what I wanted to hear. I had gone too far in the wrong direction. I corrected this fairly well, but not really in time. The situation was greatly improving toward the end, but it still remains a problem. The best papers often had little effect on the class as a whole, even though as individuals they undoubtedly responded privately to them.

The fourth stage was not a tremendously significant one. This was the stage of the conferences. I had each of them come and see me individually. I waited until almost the end of the year to do this, and I'm glad I did. I got to know them through their writing before I really knew them as persons. These conferences accomplished several things. The first and most important of these was simply teacher-student communication. We talked. They got to know me while I was learning about them. These conferences were probably most beneficial to the "problems students," especially the ones who wrote very little and who said they never had anything to write about. I convinced them that they did. And they did. Most of them really produced quite a lot after I made it clear that I was interested in hearing what they had to say on just about anything. For the good and/or prolific writers, the conferences were valuable in that they gave me a chance to expand and clarify my written comments and gave them a chance to clarify their intentions. I asked all of the students the question: "If you could get anything you wanted out of this course, what would it be?" I then tried to tell them how I thought they could get it. In a lot of cases it helped. The conferences added another dimension to my relationship with the class as a whole and helped the in-class situation quite a bit. I had a better idea of who to call on for a certain kind of response, and it was often easier for me to get a conversation going.

My students, with one major and one minor exception, liked the course. Most of them liked it a lot. The reactions I received to Prudence's course critique give some indication of the fairly universal opinion. They liked it for a lot of reasons. Many of them liked it simply because they liked to write. Nearly all of them wanted to write and often said they appreciated the course because it gave them both the excuse and the incentive to do so. I suppose most of them liked it, at least partially, because it was "easy" and because there was almost no pressure put on them. I received many comments like, "A big thanks goes out to the English Department for not blowing my mind."

(Group C - Marlene Longenecker - Continued)
They like the freedom from a required amount of work, and in most cases I feel that they took positive rather than negative advantage of that freedom. Not in all cases, by any means--but in the majority of them. Several students said they liked the course because they enjoyed hearing about what happened to other people. One student said to me: "This is the only course at U.B. that I feel I belong to." I know they talked about the course outside the class room. They almost all came regularly, and they even brought their friends to class. One of my students brought a different friend every day. He said they were all dying to see this class because they "didn't believe it."

Some of the more perceptive and thoughtful students in the class were openly disappointed in the lack of much real stimulating discussion, discussion that they often tried to start and failed to get response. I often had a half-hour dialogue with one or two students. I am losing the one I consider to be my best student for that very reason. He wants to be in a class where people talk. This, of course, is the aforementioned BIG PROBLEM. I can only hope that the situation will improve. I ordered some books for next semester in order to engender at least a few real, communal, shared experiences. I hope that helps. And I hope my own increasing ability to create an atmosphere of discussion continues to increase.

Probably, the best indication of the over-all student opinion of the class is in the incredible number of papers that began with something like: "I really should be studying now, but I felt like writing this instead." I really can't think of a better compliment to the course.

The pass/fail system is still something of a problem. I personally am in favor of it for two reasons: 1) I think grades (or at least all presently extant grading systems) are a disgrace to the whole idea of education; and (2) I have no idea how one could assign grades in this course except on the basis of quantity, and quantity is one thing all of our students have flatly rejected as a basis for anything. Hierarchies are bad enough, but student journal hierarchies are worse.

However, there is no question that the lack of grades does mean the lack of a certain type of incentive. And it does sometimes lead to what we have called "student abuse of the course." In some cases, particularly in the first few weeks, I had the feeling that the students were not always taking the course very seriously. The students themselves, though mine are almost unanimously in favor of pass/fail, have admitted that they would work harder if they were working for a grade. I'm sure that many of them would have written more. I doubt very much that the writing would have been any better. Grade incentive is incentive I can do without, and I think the students can. I have a feeling that I should and probably will demand a slightly higher minimum of work from the students next semester, but I'm not really sure why. I passed all of my students this time. Three or four of them did not really "deserve" it, but they know it, and they know I know it. I told them at the beginning that they would get out of it what they put into it. They did. That's enough for me--and for them.

The staff meetings were great. I couldn't have done without them in the beginning, and in the end they were just as valuable for perhaps different reasons. I see no particular reason why we should break up into smaller groups. Most of us spend most of our time together talking about teaching anyway. But in any case, I think we should retain the large meeting, at least every other week. I needed it and enjoyed it. It was the best "class" I had.

Group C (Marlene Longenecker - Continued)

I don't know what else we should or could call this course or whether we should call it anything. Course names rarely make any sense anyway. The only thing I can suggest is that instead of "Writing About Experience," we call it "Experiencing About Writing." That, at least, is what I have tried to make it.

If I had any major doubts about my own success this semester (which I did) most of those doubts were erased by the final set of papers I received from my students. I asked them to write something over Christmas and turn it in to me on January 10. It was not a requirement, except in two cases--students who had done nothing else all semester. I only asked them to do it. I told them not to do it if they couldn't or didn't want to. I also told them to aim for twenty pages. They shouted and yelled and said it was impossible and that they weren't going to do it. I expected maybe five papers. I got twenty (out of twenty-four students). Nearly all of them were over 15 pages long, some over forty. I've read them all over, and I'm amazed. They're good. They're all good. And the students evidently <u>wanted</u> to write them. My biggest worry at the end of this semester was that I had not really taught my students how to write. And I had tried. I was not at all certain that I should even have tried since I don't know how to write myself. However, after reading these papers, I am convinced that my students are better writers than they were when they came into the course and that they know it and they're glad. I cannot ask for much more in one semester--and as a matter of fact, I got a whole lot more.

D101-D102 Words and Thought.

This course is designed to give the student the tools he will need in developing any worthwhile style. These tools include clear thinking, the ability to back up opinion and statement with concrete evidence and argument, the ability to recognize mature and informed judgment, and an appreciation of the power of words and sentences and thoughts.

The reading of the course will consist of short prose selections. These will include readings from a basic text, plus various articles, student work, etc., chosen on the basis of its interest and timeliness. Although we may occasionally read novels, stories, plays, or poems, we emphasize that the course is not meant to be an introduction to literature or a survey of literary forms.

In-class work will consist of discussion and argument of the issues raised in the reading material.

Writing assignments will vary. Several assignments may be related to the topic of class discussion, but such relation is not required. We believe that it doesn't really matter what the student is writing about as long as he is genuinely interested in his subject. We therefore feel that it is imperative to offer the student the widest possible choice in subject matter.

We are looking for students who enjoy talking and arguing about serious subjects -- who are willing to support their opinions and beliefs in active discussion, even when those beliefs are questioned by the other members of the class.

Staff: Phillip Bodrock, Peter Culbert, Jonathan Levine.

Group D

Peter Culbert

I used two texts: Introductory Readings on Language, by Anderson and Stageberg, and The Essential Prose ed. by Van Ghent. The purpose of the former book was to make students more aware of the arbitrary nature of words and their great power to restrict thought -- how some words are thought itself and others are merely disguises for a human intentionality which lies behind them, a feeling, a gesture. The purpose of the second book, a collection of essays aesthetically pleasing for various reasons, was to revive interest by providing relief from technical essays in the other book. I tried to make them apply knowledge they could have gained from the technical essays in their papers, but few seemed to realize this purpose behind my paper assignments. I spent a little too much time discussing the technical essays in class during the first half of the term. I remedied this in the second by asking students to bring in clippings from periodicals which they suspected of containing deliberate deceptions of other sorts of lies. They criticized the clippings in class and occasionally even made use of knowledge they had gained from the technical essays. This was more fun for them and class discussions were more lively. If I teach the course again, I will try to blend these kinds of class discussion.

The course went just fine; it went the way I planned it. There was plenty of time to waste talking about anything that happened to come up. I assigned enough essays to allay guilt feelings about the course not being traditional -- not "covering" certain material.

I find that papers always fall into three categories: those which show a spark of originality (i.e. unlike my metaphor), those which are unimaginative and dull but show some effort, and those which are stupid and embarrassingly illiterate. I would prefer a "high pass," pass, fail system. A, B, C, D, F is out of the question.

I found that it was a good idea to have something mimeographed to hand out in each class in case the students hadn't read the assignment or had nothing to talk about.

In rewriting the course description for my section of 101-J, "Words and Things," I would only emphasize that in the course I will refuse to talk about ideas until I am convinced that the students have some understanding of how tentative ideas are when they are constructed of arbitrary words.

I can't imagine working closely with a "staff." I don't like to plan a class very carefully ahead-of-time; it's almost always dull.

The following evaluations and summaries were anonymous. Some students didn't turn in evaluations. They give a clear picture of how the course looked to the

Group D - Culbert (cont'd)
students and indicate the problems in it better than I can: (they're uncorrected)

1. "This class was divided into two sections, the first devoted to finding words, and coming to realize that there were different types of words. Literature was also discussed in the first section. The ways the essays were written and for what purposes was interesting. The second section was devoted to biased writing and the words which caused the writings to be prejudiced. This seemed interesting, for it showed me different things about writing. I found this semester interesting because it made me think about language and people in a completely different light."

2. "Because I enjoy thought, this course was very enjoyable. It was of value to see how other people thought. I didn't know there was any correlation between the language we speak and the way we think. Right now, I can only remember two 'units:' 'Word and Thought' and editorials. The latter was very interesting and important. You really have added to my interests, i.e. what I like to think about. At this stage of college, I think this course is more important and stimulating than a course in grammar or literature."

3. "The major thing I learned in the course was how words affect me and how not to be taken in so easily by clever writing. I thought the latter part of the course was far superior to the beginning. At first, we spent too much time on the structure and function of the words themselves (something people who were really interested in linguistics would appreciate) instead of the thoughts and ideas the words were trying to convey. Once we switched to seeing how authors try to influence our thought with their words, the course was much more interesting and relevant. Also, I find Vietnam and police brutality much more interesting subjects than whether or not chairs really exist."

4. "I think that I've had mixed emotions to the course partially because I really didn't know what to expect when September started. I thought that the discussions on words and their functions was very beneficial because I never really studied or thought about it before. In spite of the fact that it is virtually uninteresting and often dull it did present me with new ideas and made me think about the origin and usage of words and language. However, I did think that too much time was spent on it even though it requires a lot of time to fully get into it. I enjoyed the class much more when the articles were either brought in by students and presented in class or when we discussed mimeographed sheets that were passed out. I would have liked it much better if we talked more about current events such as Vietnam, the draft, etc. When we did touch on those subjects everyone seemed interested and a majority participated. In other words, next term I would recommend that less time be spent on studying language and that more time be spent in discussing current events and topics that concern all of us."

5. "The most important things I think were accomplished and discussed during the first semester: 1) The arbitrary construction of language and the varied meanings words can have; 2) The categorizing and classification of objects due to personal experience and emotions; 3) Sense impressions due to phonetics, vowels, consants and the use of speech sounds to convey meaning in poetry and prose; 4) the use of words to create bias, and slant the emotional reaction of the reader -- i.e. propagandizing.

What I liked about the English class was its small size which enabled better student to teacher contact. The readings form The Essential Prose were on the whole interesting. The one thing which I feel the course could use is a little more direction. I enjoyed the informality and flexibility of the course over the typical high school class situation, but it seemed that the planned presentation of material was sometimes lacking.

Suggestions for improvement: 1) Recordings of speeches made by prominent people on controversial issues; 2) Playing of music; 3) Submission of material by class members of poetry or prose that appealed to them; 4) Open discussions of university issues of the day."

6. "This semesters English course was different from any I have taken in the past. Actually I believe that the course was what I have wanted to do for a long time in most courses, which was not having an outline or class sylabus which must be

Group D - Culbert (cont'd)
followed. We could go in and talk about most anything that was on our minds. Of course usually we had blank minds, but even then our professor tried to inspire us to meditate. We discussed a number of things, beginning with the true meaning of words and venturing on to our opinion of something which we thought to be a mockery.

The course was also regulated by the pass-fail system. I felt that this was a step in the right direction, because of the pressure it relieved. In my case though this sort of backfired. It took too much pressure off, and I did not do enough of the assignments, which might lead to my failure in a course which I probably would have passed had it been offered on a regular basis. No doubt this sounds rather strange, but when given the opportunity to loaf off, I'll usually make a sincere effort to do so."

7. "In English 101 the problems of verbal communications were discussed. Words are only as useful as the meanings or images they transfer to the listener or reader. In many cases, these meanings which are received are not the meanings that were originally intended. This is because words can have many different meanings (denotations and connotations). These meanings are influenced by geographies, cultures, personal opinion and by a mulitude of other factors.

This topic was discussed through the reading of essays, writing papers, and talking about timely subjects in which words and their meaning play principle roles. This often led to interesting diversions into fields which man has been trying to understand for ages (dreams, the workings of his own mind, etc.). The removal of pressures for grades in this course was an important factor in its success. It gave considerable latitudes to the material to be covered and allowed each student to say what he wanted about whatever might interest him, not because he thought he would get a good grade for thinking along the same lines as the teacher, but because he thought he was right and was willing to defend his position without the fear of low grades."

8. "I found my first encounter with a college level English course to be a pleasant and rewarding one. The change in atmosphere from high school to college proved to be most advantageous in keeping me interested in the course as English is not my favorite subject. The new variations in assignments, both reading and writing, plus the class discussions were fascinating and interesting. However, the part which I liked the most was when everyone brought in something to give as a class presentation. This aspect of the course should be carried on into next semester. Although at the beginning of the semester the class did get to be boring at times, it proved to be enlightening."

9. "I have to say that in the beginning of the semester I really didn't expect to get much out of an informal English class with no tests and no force behind assignments. Surprisingly, I did learn something. The course made me more observant as a reader. It's not so much that I'll read a newspaper article and say, 'This is biased,' and go on to define bias and talk about definitions, degrees, and all that other stuff which characterized high school English, but that I'm aware of it and able to interpret writing to a better degree. The class also made me aware of how fragile and intricate writing communication is.

The creative reading assignments put a practical application to much of the technical material we read and also added a diversion to boredom and monotony.

Marks and grades seem to have become somehow very unimportant in our English class in that those who have worked will somehow win in the long run. I've found the first semester very agreeable to me and hope that the second is similar.

10. "The course definitely ended more satisfactorily than when the semester began. I'm not quite sure what the problem was, but when more people participated, it made for a better class. The topics which were assigned, on which we had to write, were challenging because they were not the trite topics that seem always to be assigned elsewhere.

The readings in the Introductory Readings on Language were very uninteresting to me. Although the basic subject did hold my interest. We should have read more from The Essential Prose.

If one made the effort to come to class, do the required assignments, then one

could say that the class was worthwhile."

Group D — Jonathan Levine

I'm afraid it's difficult to evaluate the course in terms of success or failure, because my goals at the beginning were vague. That vagueness was the most obvious weakness of the course.

The first turning point of the course came after the demonstration in Washington. I decided that since I had already committed myself to the idea that it didn't matter what material I used in the course, that I would use the subject of Vietnam, because I was interested in it myself, and thought it a good way to get at the student's interests.

I was successful in engaging the students, and in leading them to examine the ideals they had accepted without thought. I received class evaluations from the students at the end of the semester, and they were almost unanimous in being able to admit that they had learned, at least, to accept the possibility of a minority opinion being correct, and had become much more able to examine their own opinions for validity.

The students enjoyed the course -- of that I'm sure. I'm not sure, to be honest, whether that enjoyment had any real value. As I think about it, I wonder if perhaps their enjoyment came from being entertained, and being in a situation where the demands were few and there was no discipline.

I like the pass-fail system, for the lack of pressure on students and on me. It made the class relax, yet attendance was manageable (this is a general impression -- I never really counted) and interest seemed good during the classes. Without the fear of grades, most papers were still in on time, though fulfillment of reading assignments was somewhat sketchy. (Now that I think of it, it was no worse than last year.) It would be nice if the system were a little more flexible. I had a few students who could have used, and whom I would like to have given A's. A small point, though -- the system is better than the regular grading one.

Writing improved, but only slightly. Here is the area where I feel a little discipline would have done the most good. I feel I made a mistake not specifying some sort of minimum length for the papers -- most of them were simple, short, and uninvolved. Also, I didn't assign enough papers -- which will be taken care of as soon as my comps are out of the way.

Finally, our group did not function as a group, which was better for my sense of what and where I was going, I needed the freedom that came from working alone. It would have been nice to have met once in a while to talk over the classes -- we didn't, which was perhaps my fault for not taking the initiative.

Group E Richard Moss

I don't know exactly how it all happened but by the end of the summer, none of us really believed that the curriculum we had planned last semester was viable. I remember walking into the first class and telling the freshman that they should attend class because they wanted to, write because they felt like writing and if they didn't want to do anything, it wouldn't make any difference because they would pass. That may have been a crucial point in the semester because it forced us to provide some direction without imposing structure and forced the freshmen to cope with a kind of permissiveness that was beyond their experience. I don't think we realized how significant that first week of class way; we played out the old curriculum for four weeks before we realized that the group lectures were not only dull but disruptive and that the Borzoi Reader was tedious. The students were unhappy with the movement of the course and the only indication of progress at this point was their willingness to express their dissatisfaction.

Sometime after the fifth week of class each of us talked with the class about their objectives and their expectations. Generally, we sensed that the freshmen wanted to be taught how to write, that they wanted to be taught good literature, and finally that they wanted to have their sense of reality re-inforced and formalized. None of us wanted to teach anybody anything--teach as we have always understood the word--we wanted to break away from a stratified classroom based on some variant of an actor-audience relationship. I think what we really wanted was for them to see in the class's functioning or being a model of the possibility of education without traditional role relationships.

A break-through was made at this point because those students whose attendance was prompted by either residual fear or politeness stopped attending and each of us was left with a group who participated because they really wanted to. Steve's class and my class read Beautiful Losers and The Gingerman (my class also read The Nightclerk) and Peter's class read transcendental literature. We really did not co-ordinate programs and I can only say that we responded to our initial dissatisfaction individually and intuitively--I don't know if this was a failure of our group or one inherent in the group concept, but it seems that when things are really bad you have to go it alone.

I think Beautiful Losers really consolidated and defined the course: the novel defied discussion in traditional contexts and the class adapted other modes of talking about the work. They were forced to ask each other did you like---? what did you think of---? and why---? I think here they sensed that their own response to literature was far more significant than the piece of literature and transferred this recognition to their writing--they realized that they could only write honestly about their responses to their own realities. Their writing became more relaxed; I think they lost their fear of committing themselves and learned to be honest. Specifically, they stopped writing object-lesson prose and started writing decent letters; I don't know if that is what we wanted, but it was very readable and perhaps all we should expect.

On the last day of the semester it was very warm and almost everyone had drifted back to the class; they had written about each other, and after they read their papers, we talked about each other and the course itself. The class split into two groups: those who had done something and those who had done nothing. The students that did something thought the pass-fail or automatic pass was vialbe and really didn't care if the others passed. The students who had done nothing thought the course was worthless; they said they were unmotivated and thought the pass-fail caused the entire program to fail. I think their reactions were honest but perhaps too predictable: the more acute freshmen know which attitudes are fashionable and become socialized very quicly; the others seemed bitter about the whole thing and the only surprise was their not being happy over hustling any easy pass--maybe that's an early clue to the new direction.

E101-E102 The Personal Idiom and the Response to Literature. This is an introductory English course neither more enjoyable nor more tedious than the one you have always imagined. The first semester should be terribly predictable: the syllabus includes units focusing on rhetoric, logic, and semantics. Hopefully, the formal elements will be only a basis for your developing an idiom or a voice which is uniquely personal. You might consider the ten papers formal digressions on topics suggested by the reading and class discussion. Our rage for order is expected to disintegrate by January, and the focus during the second semester will shift to fictional genres, poetry and drama.
Staff: Peter Anderson, Richard Moss, Stephen Whaley.

F101-102 Style and Structure. The purpose of this course will be to develop a mastery of both the critical analysis of literature and writing skills. Using various literary forms (mainly novels, plays, etc.), we will attempt to develop an awareness of different techniques and their relation to the students' own productions. The type and scope of the materials used will depend in some measure upon the students' abilities and interests. Both the readings and student papers will form the basis of class discussions.

A basic premise will be that the student can best expand and develop his own writing skills through an awareness of technical and stylistic methods used by writers of some stature. We will study specific creative media from the point-of-view of style and structure and will attempt to have the student try his hand at different creative and expository methods.

During the semester students will be expected to develop increased mastery and complexity in their writing, perhaps culminating in an attempt at some longer work. Panel discussions may be set up to discuss specific problems and difficulties in writing and reading.

Staff: Karen Graham, Rebecca Jacobs, Margery Stein, Irene Tillis

Group F — Margery Stein

Our group did not follow a single path during the semester-our only similarity was that we both taught composition and literature. However, my course emphasized literature, particularly fiction-I only assigned about four compositions, although I did see my students individually and point out their weaknesses in detail. Usually, about a week after I had assigned a composition, I would mimeo several that provided points for discussion-i.e. where the student did not follow the assignment, why his ending was poor, how his style was ineffectual-omitting the students' names and my comments; then we would spend a period or two talking about these, as well as the nature of the composition assignments, and the students would comment on and criticize their own papers. This format seemed to make the students more immediately aware of their own defects. Another experiment that had fruitful results was to appoint a panel of about six students and have them take over the class and discuss whatever literature we were reading. This idea really helped the students to get involved in their reading, destroyed the formal teacher-student structure of the classroom, and provided some lively discussions and interesting interpretations. At these times, I would sit in the corner and comment as little as possible on the discussion I also held several three-hour sessions at my apartment-one when we were reading Eliot, at which time I played them his reading of "...Prufrock"-which provided a very relaxed and informal seminar-type atmosphere. In class, I arranged the seats in a circle, to break down the line between teacher and student.

The students themselves honestly admitted to me that, because they were on a pass-fail system, they devoted less time and effort to their English assignments particularly their compositions, than to their other subjects, as most of them were pressured for grades in other courses, therefore, I found it very difficult to achieve a high standard and quality in their writing. However, most of my students enjoyed the course enough to sign up for another semester. I try repeatedly to emphasize that I do not intend to conduct a lecture course and encourage discussion and dissent. They seem to enjoy reading fiction, particularly modern novels, more than any other form of literature, while they rebel against heavy emphasis on symbolism, intricate technical devices, and heavy psychological interpretations.

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Group F

Irene Tillis

OBSERVATIONS

Contrary to my expectations upon hearing of the institution of the pass-fail system (I was highly prejudiced against it), the students were more interested, excited, and motivated than students I had taught under the old, letter-grade system. It appeared that once the pressure of grades was off, the students felt freer and more at ease to speak in class; they no longer feared that a "wrong" response would affect their grade.

The amount of participation seemed to come also from a feeling of being part of a group of equals - the student no longer feels that he is "ranked", i.e. he is a B-/C+ , which places him 15 out of a class of 25, and thus there are 10 students "superior" to him. Of course, there were one or two more outstanding students, but as it turned out they only helped to create discussions that the others joined. Students not only felt as if they were equals, but also felt as if they had some control, some power over how the course was run. Some paper topics and readings were selected by the class, and they were free to direct discussion towards almost anything that concerned them outside the specific readings.

A strict empirical observation would have to conclude that the system did not hinder, and seemed to have helped, the learning process. Students came to class more prepared, were more willing to take part in discussions, and were anxious to rewrite papers (with no letter-grade reward....and the rewrites were their idea!)

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE SUBJECT

It seems clear to me that the American student has been and is continuing to be cheated; he is treated not as an individual, but as a potential criminal. Classes are run like prisons, and students respond to the situation. I think my experience last semester is good evidence that the most productive learning situation is one in which the process of learning is the positive incentive, not in which the fear of a bad grade is a negative one. As bad as the fear of a bad grade is the desire for a good one; the learning process should be intrinsically rewarding, but as is all too common in our society, it is made extrinsically rewarding.

Perhaps what I'm getting at extends to the role of education in society as a whole. If courses should not be grade-oriented, so then universities should not be degree-oriented. There is certainly something wrong when hundreds of thousands of students spend four years (or more) in "non-compulsory" education, and find little enjoyment in the greater part of that experience. Courses have become a menace to be feared or gotten over with; they should be regarded as an opportunity to learn and experience. The question of pass-fail vs. letter grades is the first small step towards an honest evaluation of what the universities should be accomplishing.

One Final Note: I made it clear about three weeks before the semester was over that everyone was going to pass; I made this statement quite explicitly on four or five occasions, one on the last day of class. At the beginning of this semester, many of my students, who are now in my 102 section, said they hadn't received their transcripts yet, and nervously asked if I would tell them their grades. I was stunned; I reminded them that I had told them they would all pass. They responded by saying that they were afraid to take me seriously, that other teachers had deceived them, that you couldn't really count on what most people said.

I fear something must be done, and done now, if we are to have a society in which the "credibility gap" is not the accepted or expected standard of truth

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Group F

Karen Graham

English 101- A1 was a course both in literature and composition. A short story anthology and two novels were the texts used. Lectures by the instructor were minimal--fortunately, they were usually non-existent--and class discussion was encouraged. Most of the students were soon successfully encouraged to realize that English class was their one class which was small enough to enable them to feel secure about stating their ideas. One formidable obstacle, however, remained; the class met at eight o'clock, an hour which hardly encourages much discussion. I mention this fact not merely to state a complaint; I sincerely believe eight o'clock English classes should be abolished because they seriously thwart what

should be one of the main objectives of freshmen English. Many freshmen lack confidence to state ideas openly.

The literature used in the course was not an end in itself. Discussion of the incidents in the various prose works led to more interesting conversations among the students on the ideas, problems, and conflicts which the various works suggest. Thus, before the semester was over, the students stated nearly all their views on those "overly-discussed" topics of sex, war, drugs, music, religion, as well as many facets of human behavior. Some of the students were, of course, less naive than the others, but most seemed to gain some insight and to learn the importance of tolerance from the conversations. In short, the exploration of popular topics of common interest became one of the two focal points of the course.

The other was the improvement of writing skills; clarity, unity, and originality were emphasized. Mechanical errors, such as punctuation and spelling, were noted, but not emphasized. For some students only coherency in writing could be achieved but some of the better freshmen wrote suprisingly well. The most original and interesting papers were read and discussed. The amount of literature covered in the course was probable considerably less than some English 101 classes, but the course's emphasis on class discussion often compensated for this literary deficiency.

The writing assignments themselves were diversified. Some of them arose indirectly from the material read. For example, after the class had read several short stories which each present some concept of evil, the students were asked to write about their concept of evil. The result of this assignment was a wide variety of notions on evil and a realization that the concept cannot be defined in absolute terms. From other assignments, students gained more than practice in writing skills. A visit to the Albright-Knox Gallery was required in order to write a paper on one of its paintings. Likewise the students were required to write commentaries on one of the plays at the Studio Arena, two Fellini films which were presented in Norton Conference theater, and a concert. I discovered that an alarming number of freshmen have never seen a foreign film or have never attended a professional play. Other assignments were more personal and deliberately general in order to give each student an unlimited choice in topic. Examples include the reaction to the lyrics of a song and any conflict which the student has encountered.

I tried to encourage my students to inquire seriously and maturely into various concepts which have and are influencing their lives. Hopefully, I succeeded partially.

***

Group F — Rebecca S. Jacobs

This is a minority report.

The purpose of this course was to teach students to read carefully and to write clearly. We studied a variety of genres to see which were preferred by the students. The texts of the course were inexpensive essay, short story and poetry anthologies, as well as two plays and a novel.

The essays read were: Virginia Woolf, "How to Read a Book"; Bacon, "Of Studies"; Schopenhauer, "On Noise"; Charles Lamb, "Sanity of True Genius"; Thoreau, "Conclusion to Walden"; St. -Beuve, "What is a Classic?"; William James, "Energies of Men"; John Erskine, "Moral Obligation to be Intelligent."

The stress in the Woolf essay was on the independence and discipline of the reader; throughout the course, I tried to give them the tools to understand and the confidence to trust their own judgments. We discussed what style is and how, for example, Bacon's differs from Thoreau's or Lamb's imagery from that of Walden. The emphasis throughout the course was also on human possibility, what each of them was capable of doing and being. Thoreau's comment was noted: "The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it," as well as that of William James: "Few men live at their maximum energy....the normal opener of deeper and deeper levels of energy is the will.... the result is freedom and often great enlargement of powers." The students thought these were great ideas, although they were not really struck by the essays. They found them dull in most cases (not really caring what a classic is, for example), and, often, so did I. I would not teach essays in an anthology again: somehow it

smacked of high school

The short story section was a greater success, and for reasons other than my opening definition of a short story as "something you read in the bathroom," The selections were: Hemingway, "The Three-Day Blow"; Henry James, "Brooksmith"; Poushkin, "The Shot" ; Wolfe, "Only the Dead Know Brooklyn"; Jackson, "The Lottery"; Poe, "Masque of the Red Death"; Saroyan, "Summer of the Beautiful White Horse"; Katharine Anne Porter, "Theft"; Salinger, "For Esmé--with Love and Squalor"; Wilson, "The Man Who Shot Snapping Turtles"; Huxley, "The Gioconda Smile"; Joyce, "Ivy Day in the Committee Room"; E. B. White, "The Door"; Virginia Woolf, "The Haunted House"; Thurber, "The Catbird Seat"; Faulkner, "That Evening Sun"; Mencken, "A Girl from Red Lion, P.A."

We compared the styles of James (whom they hated) and Hemingway (whom they loved). "The Shot" was a bit too contrived for them , but they loved the Brooklynese in the Wolfe story. There was a spirited class discussion comparing the Jackson and Poe selections as horror stories and trying to define the form. The class was evenly divided and nearly everyone participated. They liked the Saroyan and the Salinger and hated the Joyce ("all those old guys sitting around') They were scared by "The Door" because it was strange, but found the Thurber and "A Girl from Red Lion, P.A." delightful.

The poetry section was also somewhat successful. I tried to foster a "you-too-can-understand-and-like-poetry" attitude and to break down some mental blocks built by high school English. One student even admitted that poetry "wasn't too bad." We studied what metaphors and similes are, and, more important, what they do. One of the things which used to puzzle me in high school, after I had very obediently learned to define alliteration, was <u>why</u> it was used. No one ever explained that, that is, no one ever explained <u>how</u> poems work. Last semester I tried to teach them not only the definitions of poetic devides, but also the reasons a poet might use them. While I don't think there was a quick run on the poetry shelves of the bookstore, maybe a few of them will think poets do honest work after all.

Of the two plays, "Hamlet" was a flop, but this was largely my fault. (I wasn't adequately prepared). The Albee went over very well, with lots of class discussion and descriptions by those who had seen the movie. The work on <u>Invisible Man</u> suffered since we were pressed for time; the heavy reading load put a strain on them.

The writing part of the course consisted of two types of themes, in-and out-of-class. The first in-class theme was assigned on the first day of class and the topic was "What Sort of a Person Do You Think You Are?" Although this seems rather "My-Summer-Vacation"-ish, it gave me some idea of the writing level of each student, as well as a basis of discussion for the personal interviews, conducted during the first two weeks of classes. These meetings allowed me to quickly learn names, to put the students at ease, and to catch special problems quickly. (For example, Pilar R. writes strangely because she was born in Cuba and lived most of her life there; William H. writes poorly because he talks that way.)

The other in-class themes were devoted to assigned reading, and were unannounced and ungraded. They were given not only to ensure that the reading was being done, but that it was being done properly. One does not understand unless one can verbalize and do so without reference to the text. These were good practice for exams and allowed me to see how effective I was being. They were ungraded to emphasize their status as learning tools, not penalties. The improvements were marked in some cases, and I have continued the policy for the second semester.

The out-of-class themes were informal, also unmarked, and of the journal variety, on the premise that the student would be interested in writing about himself. Journals were due onee a week (on Fridays), and two copies were handed in. I corrected and returned one of these and kept the other to compare early and later work. Although this paper load was heavy, it did serve to rid some students of their shyness before a blank white sheet of paper.

A very basic problem, however, was that the students often complained they had nothing to write about. Since no topic was forbidden, nor any minimum or

or maximum length set, I felt this was more their problem than mine. Complaints of this sort elicited from me my "broaden-your-little-horizens" speech, with emphasis on all the fascinating goodies in the world just waiting to be seen and heard and touched and thought and written about. I found it interesting that the older students (of whom there were three) never had this problem, and my opinion that most college students are terribly dull creatures was confirmed. (one of the older students worked on a very long short story all semester and is continuing his work on it this semester.) Since I am a movie fanatic, I pushed the films a lot, trying to keep the class aware of the current movies--at least the ones on campus. (Many of them don't leave the campus from one vacation to the next.) I showed the Roethke film, although since I unknowingly scheduled it during hourlies' time, only about half the class attended. Of these, several were embarrassed by Roethke's uninhibited reading style, but most of those who attended reacted favorably. At any rate, this semester I have lowered the number of required papers to five and appended to the syllabus the list of general topics requested by several students.

I gave a midterm and a final, each a two part test. Parts I and II were given on separate days. The purpose behind these exams springs from my own experience as a student. I have found that while one is involved in a course, the aims and scope of it are difficult to see clearly. If I go back and review the reading and any notes I have made, the entire schema becomes clear. However, unless there is a good reason for review, such as an exam, I rarely make the time to do so. Both of the exams were marked, in order to give each student some general idea of where he stood. The marks on the midterm were very high, those on the final lower. Students with B plus or above on both parts of the midterm were exempt from the final, which was given during the last two class periods of the semester. This was done to lighten the students' load, and they voted almost unanimously for it.

Concerning the pass-fail system, although most of them like it, they feel it is ineffective since other courses are graded. In general, they feel all courses should be marked on a pass-fail basis, and I tend to agree with them. Out of 22 students, I gave 20 Passes and 2 Failures, one of which may be changed at the end of this semester.

My successes have been with a few individuals (for example, the student who wrote anonymously "I had never actually liked English before this year"). I have learned to handle a class better, so that there is lots of participation; the total lack of class discussion in last year's classes bothered me greatly. I have learned that you cannot reach every kid in every class, and also that you must assume your class knows nothing: whenever I have assumed knowledge on their part, I have been sadly disillusioned. I have also learned that it is important to plan the course before it begins, although it is equally important to be flexible. My failures have been mainly with individuals, such as the failure of communication with John H. I feel that I have grown as a teacher in the last year and a half, but the teaching has also taught me more about literature than several of my seminars. In short, despite the failures (which haunt me at night), I think the course was fairly successful.

My final comment is to criticize the mid-semester influx of new students. I think a student should stay with one teacher for the entire year, unless there is a very good reason for his transfer to another section (like the teacher is his mother or something.)

G101-G102 Modern Culture

Students will keep a journal about themselves and their experiences. There will be a maximum of two formal papers each semester, and those will be short. Work which is interesting will be mimeographed and discussed in class, and will form the main "text." Students will be invited to consider themselves in relation to themselves, each other, the university and the world. Additional material will come from Allen Ginsberg, Ken Kesey, Joseph Heller, Ramparts magazine, whatever movies happen to be on show, some Kafka short stories, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery. Within this framework, each student will be free to develop his own style and interest.
Staff: Peter Brittain, David Fletcher, Peter Hedblom, Roy Roussel

* * * * *

Group G

David Fletcher/Peter Brittain

As is perhaps to be expected with all new undertakings, the evolution of this group over the months of the spring and summer was so complicated that the final program bore no resemblance to any original conception. Through changes of personnel and syllabus, no common articulated philosophy of freshman teaching survived; and since the beginning of this semester no attempt has been made to formulate one. The members of the group came together out of necessity and without any preceeding friendliness or common purpose. No congeniality or friendliness developed over the semester. The group was in every sense centrifugal.

The films, which gradually came to be the content of the course, were ordered late and arranged at a bad time (Friday nights). Attendance by both students and staff declined sharply as the semester proceeded. No books were used in common, so that there was no cohesion.

Next semester, as is suggested by this submission of individual reports, each member of the group is accepting the inevitable by ordering his own books and teaching his own course without mutual consultation.

Student responses on the whole were good. Most students were gratified by the lack of compulsion, even if at first they were astonished by the contrast with High School. There were complaints that attendance was not called at the movies, with the suggestion that a roll-call might have increased the audiences. At the beginning of the semester many students were disappointed that the pass/fail system removed some of the compulsion they felt they needed; but as the semester proceeded more and more expressed gratitude for the lower pressure of English 101.

Group G

Peter Hedblom

English G 101 L, (first semester) was planned as a film-discussion course, to be focused on a series of films and student journals. Specific authors (Kesey, Ginsberg, etc.), Ramparts magazine, and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery were also suggested by the syllabus description as stimuli and points of focus.

The first and major problem was that the films had been poorly chosen. Further, there was no continuity in film subject or technique(s), the films were sloppily and haphazardly presented, they were generally of poor viewing quality. The initial high interest of the students at the prospect of a "film course" faded quickly, especially since the hour and day of screening (6:30 P.M. on Fridays) put the G101 films in competition with (usually high quality) showings in the Conference Theater.

As students and instructors gradually stopped attending films, it became necessary to work out a new balance of focal points. In L., the new organization concentrated on:

(1) assigned outside readings and class discussion of these readings, with occasional brief themes;

Group G (Pete Hedblom - Continued)

(2) the keeping of daily journals, which were collected and graded two or three times. Long intervals between instructor-interference gave most students the sense they were writing for themselves, and seemed to reduce many inhibitions and tendencies toward rationalization. A majority of journals became increasingly candid and open;

(3) an embryonic planning for the production of a class film. Although student and instructor apathy, conflicting involvements, lack of much basic technical knowledge, and gradual awareness of the large amounts of time that would be required for a worthwhile effort eventually killed this project, it did form a point of crystallization for many good discussions. I wouldn't be surprised if a small core of interested students did make the attempt on their own.

(4) individual monthly meetings of instructor and students;

(5) final exam.

(I) Outside reading, class discussions, brief themes.

We began with Orwell's 1984. This choice was based on the first film -- almost the only one well-attended. Discussions centered on problems inherent in translating any novel into film, taking into consideration the possibilities and limitations of each art form. Perhaps the most important point raised was the difference between the selectivity of eye vs. camera. That is, after a certain point, no amount of fore thought, technical skill, or novelty of approach on the part of the cameraman will achieve an emphasis which e.g. the "shot-sequence" has not pre-selected.

We also talked about this particular novel vs. this particular film. It was generally agreed the novel was superior. The class-film-project began when some students got interested in the evolution of novel into film; i.e. they wanted to find out exactly what happens between the printing of a novel and the completion of a film based on it; next, they thought about the possibilities for making a "script-less" spontaneously developing film. Also, we did treat 1984 as literature. I suggested some further readings on the social, political, and moral issues raised in

Huxley's Brave New World
" Brave New World Revisited
Bradbury's Farenheit 451
More's Utopia
Bellamy's Looking Backwards
Zamyatin's We

Some students began personal self-education courses from this reading list (according to their journal entries).

The next reading was a selection of Emerson's Journal entries (on mimeo sheets) which I had taken from Stephen Whicher's analysis of "Self-Reliance," which was also assigned. We talked about how Emerson had shaped his essay from specific journal entries.

Afterwards, I mimeoed passages from "Packed Dirt, Churchgoing, A Dying Cat, A Traded Car," a short story by John Updike, (pages 176-8 Crest paperback). The existential anxiety and despair which Updike dramatizes led to further discussions based on Camus The Stranger and The Myth of Sisyphus, which were required reading. At this juncture, to give the students a chance to evaluate their own note-taking abilities, I gave a formal lecture and then handed out mimeoed copies of it. Re the content of Camus's work, I felt most of the students were over their heads, especially in The Myth of Sisyphus. Many enjoyed The Stranger, but nearly half the class was (surprisingly) repulsed by it.

The next reading assignment was Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis, considered in relation to a mimeo sheet with quotes from Updike's above mentioned story and Camus's writings. I was trying to suggest some connections between the

Group G (Pete Hedblom - Continued)
three writers. We spent a good deal of time on The Metamorphosis. I wanted to give interested students a chance to read on in any or all of these three writers (Updike, Camus, Kafka) or to follow out any nascent interests.

At the next class meeting (near beginning of November) I distributed mimeod extracts from a letter received from a friend who had nearly died during what was apparently an acute asthmatic attack. The letter discussed Mann's Magic Mountain and my friend's application of it to his own experience, during which, as he phrased it, "death became a reality for me." There was some student skepticism concerning the authenticity of the letter; after I had read all of the original, we had two excellent class discussions. Some students (despite warnings) began to read Mann.

Subsequent class discussions centered on an LP recording of Ecclesiastes (read by James Mason), and LP recordings by Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, Buffy St. Marie, Phil Ochs, and The Beatles.

We also talked about the "class-film." Some of the student disgust with the Friday night showings emerged as constructive suggestions and creative notions as to how a better class-film could be produced. For a while it seemed the project might come to something. I submitted a request for funds to the English Department. However, (as I've mentioned) a variety of difficulties -- especially time conflicts -- killed the film. This failure was useful insofar as it gave some good material for class discussion concerning practical and technical aspects of film production, and also suggested to some students that the University held real opportunities for fulfillment outside the classroom.

Ramparts magazine provided discussion material on contemporary events, in particular the Vietnam war and the Washington "confrontation," We also spent a week talking about the current drug situation, hippies, etc.

The brief written themes were on assigned topics. The first asked each student to write three one-sentence descriptions:

(1) of him (her) self now
(2) of him (her) self in 10 years
(3) of the parent (or nearest living relative) of the opposite sex now.

The second assignment asked each student to compare, evaluate, and justify a preference for one of three different versions of a section from Ecclesiastes (one from the original, one by Orwell (of Strunk and White's Elements of Style), and one by the instructor). The assignment was an attempt to get students thinking about writing style, diction, etc. (See section (4) below,) Further brief assignments were highly individualized, and given at the monthly meetings to fit in with particular student interests or difficulties.

(2) Daily journals:

Student response was eventually unanimously favorable; most were highly enthusiastic from the start, although a few did object. These few stated the requirement that they write something every day made the entries mechanical and stifled creativity. Gradually, however, even the most vociferous complainers acquiesced; at least two shifted their opinions entirely, stating that their lives - to a large degree - came to focus on the journals. Others, not opposed to the journal concept from the start, stated or wrote that they entered many situations with the journals in mind and even sought out new experiences in order to gain journal material.

Below are some student responses, taken from the examination (which had no question bearing directly on the journals):

Group G (Pete Hedblom - Continued)

"by talking about it for a while. Surprisingly enough, I'm still keeping one, although it is irregular. When I first started the journal, I really enjoyed doing it; slowly, however, it became a hated chore - mainly, because I was writing it with completely the wrong attitude - it was half for somebody else and half for me. And so, partly in disgust, I might add, of not having the journal collected one week that my instructor said it would. (I only had the journal collected once during the semester), I started doing it for me and for me alone. The language became filthy, and my innermost thought went in, but what came out was more me than had been before. I don't think I'd let anybody read it now. So that has definitely been a successful part of the course."

"I kept a journal and read the assignments, all beneficial."

"To my journal which is very important to me, and the fact...."

"I do know that I am glad I have the journal and hope that when it is no longer a requirement, I will still keep one for myself, for that's why it's important, only for yourself, really."

"I found myself and am still changing with every day. My outlook, as I've said before, has changed greatly!"

"Journal writing is the greatest thing that ever happened to an English course. Having to write something original every day is far more stimulating to creativity than searching through reference books to copy out material on the....."

(3) Film

The film project was eventually aborted; good discussions and the possibility for some members eventually to make their own film were valuable products of this experience. I suggested various books on film technique and theory, in particular, Film, A Montage of Theories, by Mac Cann. This project is mentioned in section (1) above.

(4) Individual Meetings

These were devoted to particular suggestions and recommendations as to how each student might improve his (her) formal writing style. I tried to base my evaluations and advice on the brief themes, leaving journal style entirely up to the student, and emphasizing that (since they were writing for themselves, informality in the journals was entirely acceptable. A few students evinced diverse particular interests in e.g. the haike, playwrighting, and even Gestalt therapy. I soon discovered a tremendous disparity in levels of preparation, general intelligence, perceptivity, awareness, and motivation from one student to the next. With regard to English skills in particular, some students seemed to be two or three years ahead of others. On this score also I was thankful for the P/F system (see page).

These meetings also gave the students a chance to make private complaints, suggestions, requests, etc., and were good learning experiences for all concerned, especially the instructor. After the 2nd brief theme assignment, I gave these individually at the monthly meetings.

(5) Final exam - CF. attached copy

ENGLISH G 101 LI - EXAMINATION

Suggestions (write on as many as you like, or on anything they suggest):

1. Most important or vital or significant event in your experience since September 8.
2. A major change in you, your outlook, your values, since early September
3. The Ideal U.B.
4. What Needs to be changed at U.B.
5. Your Attitude Toward the Pass-Fail System of Grading, or the Journal Concept

Group G (Pete Hedblom - Continued)

6. What was bad about the Course? (Aside from irregular meetings and poor films)
7. How would you change the course?
8. Any ideas re "The Film" -- (Title, 'Plot,' Sound, Technique, Etc.)
9. TIME Magazine's Award of "LBJ as Lear" for the "Man of the Year"
10. Drugs: Depression vs. Elation
11. Life without vs. Life with Drugs
12. You in 5, or 10, or 15, or 20 (or more) years
13. "Time is..."
14. "My trouble is..."
15. "After I die..."
16. "I won't die..."
17. "I'm here now because..."
18. The things that do not matter to you
19. "...The waiting at the door too long, winter, wages, and self-disdain. Endure? That is the dialect of love..."
20. "...Who stays here long enough will stay too long. Time snaps her fin, and there's her creature caught, fixed in the pleatings, fated to return, as thin as paper in the mother-folds. Absurd though it may seem, perhaps there's too much order in this world; the poets love to haul disorder in.."
21. "All generalizations are half truths, including this one."
22. "I was not there then because..."

PASS-FAIL SYSTEM -- STUDENT RESPONSE AND INSTRUCTOR"S EVALUATION

First, I adapted the P-F innovation somewhat. The journals and occasional themes were graded A,B,C,D. Any grade below a B (i.e., a C++ or lower) was considered as F. The traditional gradation was intended to lesson the shock of the shift form a school system otherwise entirely conventional in grading, but mainly to give each student a more accurate notion of the instructor's opinion about the degree of his improvement or slippage. However, because of the highly individual nature of the student journals, and the encouragement given to the development of fresh personal styles, it was difficult for me to work out a justifiable and consistent grading system. The more formal brief themes were better suited to this "revised" P-F system. The student response to P-F was at first almost unanimously favorable, for what I suspect were shallow and grade-system-conditional reasons. Students quickly realized it would be nearly impossible to justify an F so long as they completed the minimal and "external" requirements.

On the other hand, and increasingly, was the realization (for students first; for me second) that internal motivation and interest would sooner or later be crucial for each student. Many students readily admitted that they found difficulty in readjusting from a learning environment in which grades were paramount (although, according to the students, criteria for grading in many other courses were lax, inconsistent, entirely non-existent, or employed as (what they call) "faculty weapons.") to one in which grades were de-emphasized and used (hopefully) only to help the student evaluate his (her) development. Some specific student reactions to the P-F system (taken from answers to question number 5 on the examination) are given below. I found the P-F system ideal, especially since it can easily be revised or adapted in a combination with the more tradition letter-grading system. The only difficulty is the obvious one: students tend to spend more time in courses which exert more obvious external pressures. P-F would be much more effective if all courses were so graded.

(Group G - Pete Hedblom - Continued)

"...I agree whole-heartedly with the pass-fail system of grading. After all, isn't college the grading of your personal effort? Therefore, if one exerts any effort, he passes; if he does not, he deserves to fail."

"...This I think stinks as I see it. Last year the frosh had a better chance to stay in school with their A in English. This year we only have a "Pass-Fail" that doesn't help our average or our chances of staying in school. "Pass-Fail" stinks unless all classes use it."

"I like the Pass-Fail system because you don't have to worry about competition, or that your biggest rival beat you by 1/10 of a point..."

"The whole school would lose its competitive spirit if a pass-fail system were initiated."

"The pass-fail system of grading is not desirable. Certainly, it eliminates alot of pressure, but it does not give the student a good idea of how he is succeeding in his studies."

"What seems to happen under a pass-fail system is this: the students go in with sort of a half-assed attitude about the course."

"It is fairly easy to get through with a passing grade if you try even a little. But on the other hand, English was usually a course which could pull your Index up where now you are allowed to work hard and pass or like some (sic) do very little and still pass, but your Index rating is at same level. Still, the course for that matter is what you put into it."

"...it destroys initiative."

"I would like to take just to experiment in other fields. If I were to take these courses on a letter grade system, they could very well pull my average down, but if I were to take them on a pass-fail basis, there would be less chance of failure and effecting my over-all grade. For a student that is taking a course which he is good in and he expects to do well (sic) he would like to receive a better grade in this subject. By receiving this grade, he could probably increase his overall average. It would also be an inspiration to make him work harder. In conclusion, I would like to say that I feel any subject which a student wants to major in should be required to take the grade system(sic).

H101-H102 Literature and Composition

This course is designed to acquaint the student with the various forms of literary composition, and to help him develop his own compositional abilities. In the first semester four or five poets will be chosen for intensive study. These might include, for example, Donne, Pope, Keats, Hopkins, Yeats, Eliot, Williams, etc. The second semester will be directed towards a study of the novel, the short story, and the drama. An effort will be made to orient this part of the course around some central problem. For example, the course might consider how various modern writers treat the problem of the absurdity of modern life, and the works to be studied might include the plays of Albee, the novels of Genet, the stories of Kafka.

The course will work toward the development of patterns of method and approach that will enable the student to understand and elucidate the works considered. Studentw will be asked to write four or five papers each semester which describe these patterns and show how they enhance the understanding of a particular piece of literature. It is also hoped that the student will maintain a notebook that presents his experience with the classroom situation, with the ways in which the material is presented and discussed. The papers and notebooks will be reviewed by the instructor in an effort to make the student aware of more effective methods which might be employed in the presentation of his ideas.

Staff: Anthony Boyle Anthony Bradley Paul Watsky

Group H (1) Anthony Boyle
(2) Anthony Bradley
(3) Paul Watsky

Texts Used:
(1) Collected Poems of Yeats, Donne, Eliot
(2) Collected Poems of Yeats, Auden, Cummings, Roethke
(3) Collected Poems of Browning, Yeats, Donne

Number of Papers Required from Students:
(1) 8 papers of 3 to 4 typed pages
(2) 5 papers of 3 to 4 typed pages
(3) 4 papers of 3 to 4 typed pages

Explanation of Paper Assignments:

(1) My students were very deficient in basic writing skills. When it became apparent that the class discussions of poetry were not efficiently helping them with putting things on paper, I decided to use most of the remaining class time for lectures and discussions about the mechanics of writing. This explains why my students wrote papers than those of the other instructors in my group.

(2) The students in this section were better equipped than those in Boyle's to deal with English composition. I was better able to attempt to have them deal with literary topics, viz., their own experience of poems not discussed in class.

(3) The intention of papers set was to discover if students could analyse poems on their own. But I could not get them to work hard enough to improve, so I cut back on writing and concentrated on reading assignments and class discussion.

Usual Class Procedure:

(1) I began the semester by talking about poetry, attempting to discover if students could utilize concepts like metaphor, image, stymbol etc. in attempting to relate to a poem. But when the papers became more and more dismal and depressing the discussion of poetry became a peripheral issue and class time was used (starting about the third week of November) to explain things like "the English sentence," "the necessity of clarity and logic."

(2) Class time was used for the analysis of individual poems, and to relate those to the selection of poems being studied; usually, half the period was taken up with lecturing on my part; and the other half with discussion.

(3) My students liked to discuss practically anything except literature, but they clammed up about poems, so I spent most of my time lecturing. Being pally didn't help, blustering didn't, nor did my speaking to them as I would to other graduate students. Those who were interested, perhaps three, contributed well enough from the beginning, but the rest were adamant.

Student Reaction:

We found that few of our students had elected the course because of an attraction to our syllabus, but, rather, had selected our classes because the times were convenient. With few exceptions they demonstrated indifference and a good deal of hostility to poetry and were unresponsive to most types of class discussions. Perhaps it was unwise not give them what they wanted--easy stuff--"Today let's talk about your summer vacation." But we felt that since we had offered to talk about poetry, this is what we had to do. The choice we made may have been wrong, but we felt committed to our choice. We must admit that we made a few converts, but maybe not enough to justify what we were doing. Few freshmen have, or care to have, the ear and sensitivity necessary to evaluate poems.

Evaluation of Pass-Fail System:

Because of the demanding nature of the Freshman program, students must save time by cutting corners wherever possible. The unilateral pass/fail allows them to neglect English. The three of us are extremely reluctant to fail students and won't terrify them with idle threats. If other departments were also using the pass/fail system the situation would be different. As it is, freshmen spend the minimum of time on their papers--which means we spend longer correcting their papers than they do in writing them. The effect on people considering English as a major is demoralizing, and we feel that some have been dissuaded from proceeding with us. We would recommend, unless the pass/fail systems shows signs of becoming general university policy, that the old grading system be re-instituted for Freshman English, and that the pass/fail be applied to those who are less oriented to a secondary-education system that puts success at any cost ahead of intellectual development--namely upper classmen and graduate students, who are, presumably, devoted to their field.

Working as a Staff:

We were solaced by hearing that our problems and frustrations were not unique. We could pretend, of course, that we found a way to assault and capture the interest of our students, making them more than passive receptors, but we doubt we have. In all seriousness, we must admit that the effects of being together as a group have not been more nor less than in the past when we merely assaulted the most available and willing person with our frustrations.

J101-102 (Poetry)

This course will have two main purposes: (1) to introduce students to the problems involved in the close reading of carefully and sparingly selected poems; (2) to introduce students to the problems involved in writing well-organized, carefully polished, short essays. The subjects for the essays will be derived from the poetry. Increased freedom with regard to the reading and to the paper topics will be given the student as his progress merits it. We hope to cover with some thoroughness certain basic matters involved in the understanding and enjoyment of poetry at a reasonable level of sophistication, and thereby furnish a valuable preparation for students who plan to continue the study of literature at a higher level. The course is in no way closed, however, to students without such plans. It is hoped that the instruction offered in constructing an essay will be equally beneficial to any student who desires the skill to write properly.
Staff: Tom Lynner, Richard Tow, Richard Wheeler

Group J — Tom Lynner

It was my basic goal to inculcate freshmen, simultaneously, with an understanding appreciation of style and meaning in examples of poetry and prose which were conspicuously successful, and an idea of how they might improve their own writing. I hoped that clear and natural relationships between the two projects would emerge. As I recall--though my sense of the "history" of the course telescopes into a rather general impression which lacks features of particularity such as "turning points" and individual successes or failures--two ideas that I emphasized in reference to the classes's own writing were the excision of superfluities and the importance of forceful expression. Needless to say, covering the latter point required attention to most-if not all- of the errors and weaknesses to which prose is prone.

Since I did not conduct a poll, I feel qualified to make only a vague appraisal of student reaction to my course. I like to think it was well received, and there is some basis for this optimism insofar as only three out of an original twelve failed to return for the second semester. I clearly recall sensing periods which seemed only to bring out dissatisfaction and discouragement in the class, but I have no sense of a pattern at work in this. One student who volunteered his objections to me made some suggestions of his own toward changing various aspects of the course, but he was never able to articulate himself in concrete terms. (I am aware that his incapacity ironically tells against my success.) His consistent phrase was "to bring experience into the classroom," but upon pressing him, I discovered that he did not have in mind anything remotely close to the diary/journal-book set up, nor was he sure what his idea <u>was</u> close to. Dealing with the question of student reaction is relevant to the assessment of the new pass/fail grading system. This system took a burden off of the students immediately and a closer, more friendly relationship between me and the class was probably facilitated. The ironic dividend of this system--the fact that the student it hurts the most is the student having trouble in other courses but doing excellent work in English--seems to me to tell against pass-fail grading in one department alone; at least it is a fault worthy of consideration. Because I don't know the entire idea to which the pass-fail system is a response, I can only offer these few items and indicate where I think evaluation should begin. As a teacher, I like the opportunity to escape giving marks which I only understand imperfectly myself and which I feel incite the preference of the meaningless over the important. The particular point of contact which the evaluation of student attitude toward the course has in common with the effects of the pass/fail grading is that the new system faults analogies between this year's class and previous groups. As I said the student is more at ease right from the beginning, and it is hard to decide how much of his contentedness reflects his relative security (I was unable to hide my reluctance to fail a student who shows any promise whatsoever) and how much it reflects his approval of the matter at hand.

Working together as a staff failed to materialize significantly in our course, though a quick check will show we had intended to do so at first. Two basic reasons for this failure occur to me. I proposed a course which by its nature threw the instructor back on his individual sense of not only the meaning of

poetry but the 'goodness" of it. Because each one of us was forced to develop his class periods, his course matter etc. from a radically subjective basis agreements tended to be artificial ones. Want of time gently and imperceptibly impelled us away from each other, and at an early stage of the fall semester, each one was making his own way. Though I'm interested in the possibilities of group teaching in general, I am unable to visualize its benefits in precise terms, and, therefore, I feel our failure's effect on the students themselves was slight.

When I conceived of the central idea for J101, I instinctively adopted the assumption that all freshmen were capable of progress in improving their writing styles and techniques. Likewise, I assumed that through some effort and coaching they might come to read with a new sharpness and depth. There was never any substantial basis for these assumptions, and while they have not been annihilated by the results of the fall semester, I am less glib about the issue now. Reading over the last writing assignment for the fall semester, I distinctly felt that the goodness and badness of various papers reflected, more than any other factor, whether or not the student had given the task any care. Considering which students had done well and which had performed badly, I was almost warranted in concluding that excellence in writing is a random presence. Yet I must say that my sincere impression is definitely that the class has made over all progress; but I find myself hard put to prove this or even articulate it to myself; admittedly, impressions proceed from an emotional ground and are subject to being awry of the facts. So I am forced to offer hedgeing conclusions, inconclusions even. It is perhaps significant that the reading matter of my section has been shifted; rather than plowing through mimeographed poems for another semester, we opted to read four important works of literature, the Iliad, Othello, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, and Waiting for Godot. We arrived at these choices through a modified dialectic between myself and the class. I am tentatively experimenting with a modification of the diary idea. I am seeking to unite the project of daily, informal writing with the reading project described above by making the matter of the note books the response which the student has to the literature. I am urging the students to make their notes the basis for classroom discussion. If they have something down on paper in front of them, perhaps I will be able to get them to lead the discussion more. So far I have had a hard time restraining myself from hogging the show. I am not so modest as to belittle my own sensibility as compared with theirs, as some instructors seem to be doing, but the class tends to go mute en masse when ever I jump in. The necessity of taking notes coerces the student into at least a preliminary examination of the assigned matter. This is tentative; I have yet to read the first set of note books. What will result I can't say. The changes which I have implemented do not imply the wholesale rejection of the principles I set forth in my proposal. They were brought about largely because we needed the change and we needed a basic explicitness of plan, a syllabus orientation.

* * *

Group J — Richard Wheeler

The schedule of reading, which fell roughly into four groups, emphasized poetry, and was supported by the use of one fairly light weight book of criticism--Archibald MacLeish's Poetry and Experience. The reading of the first part of the course consisted of poems run off on the duplicating machine. Except for a few medieval lyrics and some of Mary Barnard's translations of Sappho, these were selected from Eliot's era and the following one: Auden, Dylan Thomas, Lowell, Anthony Hecht, Donald Justice, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, etc. This section was followed by the first four chapters of the MacLeish book: 'Words as Sounds,' 'Words as Signs,' 'Images,' 'Metaphor.' The last two sections of the course were devoted to the major poems of Keats and Donne respectively (Laurel eds.). After some writing at the beginning on non-academic matters, not terribly successful, the papers--inside and outside of class--were co-ordinated with the readings.

Class discussion was at times highly successful, at times less so, and occasionally very poor. I think I could detect general improvement in the writing skills of the students, but that I find a very elusive quality to estimate. We had group reports on particular poems toward the end of the semester, and I found making two persons specifically responsible for a poem in detail helpful not only in sounding the reading ability of students in a manner touching areas not always accessible in grading essays, but also in encouraging the class to respond as a whole, as a group more or less of peers.

The idea of allowing the course to evolve its own order and rate proved more attractive as an ideal than a reality. I found that as my own energy level worked a steady course downward over the semester, my classroom experience and efficiency took on the same pattern, and I think that a pre-determined structure designed in some detail might have done something to alleviate this sense of waning. (Some of my students, I might add--in partial defense of my own accusation--have been gracious enough to express disagreement with this appraisal.)

The co-operative plan of teaching was not a decisive factor in the working out of the three courses listed as belonging to our group, although Mr. Lynner and Mr. Tow and I maintained an informal interest in one another's programs.

K 101-K102 Finding an Individual Voice (O.P. Jones, James Miller, Courtney Walsh

This course will move away from many of the ideas and methods which the traditional approach to composition and literature usually imposes. We are not interested, for example, in the abstract notion of style--something we feel to be too rigid and mechanical, something which can lead to dead prose and standardized thought; rather we are searching for a number of styles which will reflect accurately and faithfully each one of our minds. As a start, we will undertake a critical examination of the various media which shape so many of our responses to "life": T.V., radio, film, newspapers, magazines. As the need arises, we will also work with fiction, drama, and poetry. But the goal will always be to find and develop our own individual voices. We want to create our own environment rather than respond to one that has been created for us. Class discussions will help us toward these goals, but more important will be the written assignments, which will include both journals and formal papers. There will be no announced text, since the class itself will serve as our subject matter; from time to time, however, we may turn to books for special purposes--like Ellison's Invisible Man, Mailer's Advertisements for Myself, Goodman's Growing Up Absurd, and McLuhan's Understanding Media. Class discussion will be on an informal basis and written work will be handed back with extensive comments instead of grades.

* * *

Group K O. P. Jones

While the actual course proposal did not guide the activities of the class, the effort of making it did help to engage our group, clear the ground of past misgivings, and give us three months to transpose an overly ambitious proposal to a more modest design. Perhaps it was fortunate that very few students had read the course description before they signed up; none of the books mentioned were used; we did not examine the mass media which the instructors had originally condemned as a threat to an "individual voice." I was then left with what most students had wanted: a writing course that was more "creative" than expository.

The title, as well as my introduction, suggested autobiographical expression: if they could deal imaginatively with their preoccupations, it would be a foundation for a personal voice. Usually, they turned in three to four pages a week; I returned them with comments (but no grades) on Monday. The better entries were mimeographed and distributed for discussion. Occasionally students read aloud with discussion later. Several Fridays we broke up into fives and had critic circles. They tried to criticize each other's work for focus, consistency, and coherence. The student reading and critic circles were new to them and perhaps exposed them too much. The weekly routine of journal writing produced a variety of experiments; for the better students, it meant, "I could write what I wanted and not what the teacher wanted. "For the average student it meant, "It's difficult!" - the burden of selecting subjects and determining the form and length was a great challenge.

With the arrival of the text, Modern Culture and the Arts, they read and wrote more the last two months. From each of the book's eight sections (painting, poetry, sculpture, architecture, etc.) they selected one essay a week and wrote eight "appreciations" in all. To "appreciate" was to relate any aspect of the chosen article to a relevant point in one's life. The text was excellent, but ultimately too difficult, as I later found out. It seldom fit into our discussions and I did not intend to analyze its expository style or ideas. And many complained that they had little "cultural" experience to relate to the articles.

K 101 had no Unsatisfactory students. This means that they all managed to do at least the minimal requirements which I set up at the start: regular attendance; three entries per week; and eight "appreciations." I spent over a week discussing the new system. Most were convinced that (1) they would work better without the grade chasing. (2) they would see whatever gains they made in K 101 reflected in other academic work. (3) at the same time, they knew K101 was not designed to prepare them to write analytical prose in other fields.

With twenty of last years (continued)

Group K (Continued)
students back for the second term, their work can be eventually assessed for its overall improvement.

Helpful comments from the class came in last month. Some of their reactions represent more clearly how the course defined in their minds certain problems and tasks. To begin with, one girl spoke about the chore of turning her feelings to words.

> I have found that for someone with not too much imagination(myself), writing a journal each week has sometimes been difficult. My weeks are not especially exciting and finding something new and different to write each time is not easy.

Her objection resembled that of many others. In cases such as this, the person struggles to use the journal to shake off whatever may belittle his sense of self. He encounters his sense of dissatisfaction, intensifies his inner questings, and liberates "an individual voice." Something like this can be seen at work in the two entries of Dec. 14, 1967 and Dec. 3, 1967 (v. attachment) Both tend to confirm a definition of biographical writing as "an act of successful separation from a self that has been confused or helpless." Add to this, perhaps, a self that has been forgotten.

I suspect that the difficulty of such students does not spring solely from a lack of imagination or exciting experiences. It was hard for her because it opened up ways of expression not encouraged in high school. Most writing on that level is formal, analytical, and not self exploratory. Remember, this is when one is told to avoid the use of the personal pronoun, "I". Writing indeed becomes hard without a selected subject, an approved style, and directions. The option that K101 gives is summed up by one student:

> Your interpretation of the course(finding an individual voice)-to feel things, and not to analyze and explain, is a good one, but I often wonder if you "appreciate" how difficult this is(for me, anyway). One spends all of grammar school and high school perfecting a style of expository writing and thinking in terms of analysis. Then, suddenly, we're expected to change. Changing to your definition of writing isn't just a question of following directions and doing a paper thus. Rather it requires the "breaking" of something that is just short of a habit.

She succeeds in doing this. Note how she accounts for what she saw and felt in three scenes from Viridiana (v. attachment) The effect of the scenes on her sympathies and attention comes out clearly and concretely. Students who did fall back on a more analytical treatment of these scenes showed less understanding. The prose tended toward the abstract, did not account for how they saw or felt details, and often imputed motives to characters, without dealing fully with the evident, the specific effects.

Very few students grasped the contrast of the two approaches as sharply as the student above. What she calls "my interpretation of the course" was not a part of the original proposal. As I recall it grew out of a discussion of a song (written by one of the students) called "Mr. Lonely". We then looked at "Ode to Billie Joe" and considered the value of dramatic presentation versus "telling", or explaining. A few students saw the contrast quite clearly and sided with the latter approach. One student was particularly interesting in his final appraisal.

Group K (Continued

> There has been a great emphasis on describing actions, feelings, and the way we see things. I have used "the freedom of subject rule" of the course to avoid describing. For the most part I have tried to be an "explainer." But not without reason. Before I can effectively describe an action or a feeling, I must understand it. Viridiana typifies this. After seeing the movie I didn't know exactly how I felt about it...for instance the scene where Jorge gets the maid, and the cat pounces on the mouse.... A discussion of the movie in class, where two opposing points of view were presented, started to clear up the questions in my mind... I still didn't coherently understand the movie...so I started to write about it, and as I did, things started to fall into place. Writing the paper helped to put together what I saw in the movie, so that I could understand it better.

Making students more aware of the way they approached writing and the particular way they saw things is just another restatement of the course title. The above quote gives the process of the course in miniature. His awareness of an option has lead him to overcome his initial opposition. As an "explainer", he finally declares his use of writing as a form of seeing. The process of writing made what he had "seen" into a more intense and objective vision; it "put together" what he saw, and "re-vised" it. My guess would be that as one gains confidence in how he arrives at a clearer view of things, he may find an individual voice.

Group K Attachments #1 Jones

It was Thursday, bright and early, and five of us set out for a day at the place where "oldsters" are always youngsters-Disneyland. We parked the car and walked toward the gate. I remember remarking to myself that it was a lovely day; not really too hot for July in California. Upon entering, we embarked upon a world apart from our usual world, a world of fantasy and imagination. There seemed to be a smile on everyone's face, and you could tell, just by looking around, that the adults were having just as much fun as the kids. Oh, there were thousands of kids-big kids, little kids. All day long people were enjoying themselves, being little kids again--morning, afternoon, and evening, where my story takes place.

It was about seven, and we had settled down in a cafe, just outside the door of the Frontierland oldtime saloon, for a bit of supper. We were all very tired especially one certain kid-Marc(age 3, remember). We were all very hungry, except one certain kid Marc(age 3). He had started to cry when he was told to eat his hot dog, not just a crabby cry, but a downright screaming yell!! We were all about to give up our enterprise of making him stop when a large booming man emerged from the saloon. And boom he did, reaching for his six-guns resting on his hips-his silver star gleaming on his chest. He stood directly behind Marc and said, (did I say said?) "Who's crying?-nobody cries in Disneyland; if I find him, I will lock him in jail!

The whole area became silent and Marc was horror stricken. His watery eyes grew large, and his mouth only opening to let his hand guide his hot dog to its directed place. Marc dared not make a wimper or turn around for fear of looking into the eyes of the huge sheriff, who by the way, purposely avoided looking at him.

Group K (Continued) Attachments #i Jones

The sheriff noisely made a retreat, shouting threats at crying kids, and Marc uttered an audible sigh of relief. He quietly finished his hot dog, drank his milk ignored the eyes that were watching his reactions, and was equally silent for the remainder of the evening. I'm quite sure that he was secretly looking for the sheriff, because I know, being transformed into a child myself again, that I was.

* * *

Movie: Viridiana

(1) scene after Arrival:

Her hands swept over her suitcase; she opened its lid softly. Atop her clothes lay a crown of thorns and a wooden cross. She clasped each to her and knelt down on the floor where she had imposed a bed.

Pure hair wreathed her Virgin's face as a nightgown of coarse material robed her body. The crown of thorns and the wooden cross were placed on a pillow; two white hands folded reverently. Her head bowed slightly. One lone candle flickered an aurora of perfection about her--the room glowed as she yeilded to her prayers and penance.

(2) scene after death of uncle:

The large house stood relatively vacant--the uncle's niece postponed her return to the convent.

Viridiana slipped into her coat and tied a black scarf about her head. Her hair was pulled back so her face shown sharply against the hue of the scarf. The face was no longer that of a Virgin but now that of a saint.

Her steps were steady, brisk, aware of their destination as she entered the village. And with the grace of all the saints that have gone before her she succumbed to the prescribed acts of charity. Her shoulders leveled; her features turned benign. Viridiana walked amidst the beggars.

Leaning over to one of them, she took from his arms an infant and encircled it in her own arms. She beckoned to the refuse. They followed eagerly beside the flaxen vision which promised comfort and warmth.

(3) last scene:

Into the night, from a small hard room, there emerged a woman. Free blonde hair flowed about beautiful features as Viridiana made her way to the house.

She knocked; the door swung open in answer. Jorge's form blocked the bright light but not the music the room emitted. She cast her eyes down, then too quickly met his gaze. Questions were asked by Jorge, but no responses came. He held his hand out to Viridiana and led her through and beyond the door. He instructed her to sit and, with few words, to play the game of cards he and the maid had been playing.

One white hand rested upon the cards dealt it.

* * *

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 D                    C                    D
Hey, Mr. Lonely, you're driftin' in the middle of the night...
 D                    C                    D
Hey, Mr. Lonely, you cast a shadow in the misty light...
 EM                   A
The soft quiet flow of your tears
                     A7
Begins to engulf all you hear
                D              C  D  C
And all that you see...
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Group K (Continued)

Hey, Mr. Lonely, the breezes of your memories are gone...

Hey, Mr. Lonely, your life of happiness has turned to stone...

You start to wander aimlessly about

In search of something that all throughout

Your life has been here...

And you just don't see...

Hey, Mr. Lonely, don't sit and try to waste your life away...

Hey, Mr. Lonely, don't think about the fears of yesterday...

Just tuck away your sorrow and despair

Renew your life and you won't be aware

Of loneliness...of loneliness...of loneliness...

* * *

This was the last week that I'd be working at the center. I was disappointed when I discovered that the children were going to a movie and I wouldn't be able to help them out. I just had time to say goodbye to everyone; to tell them that I hoped to see them again but I wouldn't be able to teach because of my new schedule. I received a "thank-you" from each of the children. They stood looking at me. I thought "What have I done for them?" I reflected on this question, troubled by it because I couldn't answer it in any worthwhile way. I spent many weeks with the children, yet have I acquainted myself well enough with them and their ways?

I remembered the first time I went there; afraid, insecure, saying to myself, "What am I doing here? I don't know much about these children." After that first class I found that I was trying to help out but that I didn't know how. I wanted to change their world and make it like ours. I wanted to give my knowledge to them--I couldn't. There was no way to change them. I was buried in my own emotions. Blinded by my want to change everything they were. I looked on them as deprived, bewildered lost and lonely. I was to be their hero and save them. I was looking at these kids in the light of what they weren't instead of what they are and can be.

My attitudes slowly changed with each successive week. I began to realize that they were useful people and needed help to learn like all other kids; like all people. Maybe they are special. It takes a lot of patience to teach them and they can't learn much, but they can, and want to, learn enough to live a useful life. I found out they like to do things by themselves. They want to do right and good; to have fun, to make friends; to be loved.

I don't think they ask too much but I don't know how to give them all they want. In all the weeks I went there I don't know of any of the children that changed. I didn't seem to do much good. I don't exactly want a miracle. I just wish that once Joey or John would have remembered a word I taught, or a color-anything. Before I left the room I looked at each face so loving; and so happy, so full of life. I realized I loved those "special" kids. I'm going to miss them. Joey came to me and kissed me goodbye. I was happy inside but I wanted to cry. I left.********** ******* ***** December 3, 1967

Group K (Continued)

Stop and stare. Stare into the reflection. Look long and hard. It reveals only disappointment, disatisfaction, unhappiness. Melancholy. Want a change. Need a change. Know where I can get one cheap? Fast? Neither do I. Look at the hair, the eyes, the skin, the lips, the nose. Look at the face. Open the drawer-quick! Take it all out. Start with the eyes. Put on the black-the eye liner-thick, hard. No, no, no!-that's too much, looks too tough. That's not who you want to be. Soften it with the white. Be mysterious. Try some shadow. Try the brown, the white, the blue, the turquoise, the green. Paint have fun! look like a clown. Feel like a clown? Tone it down. Take some off-put some on. Change. Change. Now for some mascara on the top lashes; maybe on the bottom too. Not too much-wait-hold it! Okay...you look tired. Cover the black rings under the eyes. There that's it-much better. Sickly pale; need some color. High on the cheeks instant health. It does wonders. Almost as good as Vitamin C. Almost finished. Not quite right. Maybe a little lipstick would help. It's so light-almost white. Ghostly. The London look. The Twiggy look, yeah! Right? Comb the hair. Put it up. Take it down. Pull it back. Let it loose. Part it down the middle. Hippy. Part it down the side. Sexy. A gray hair. Do blonds have more fun? Put on your fall. Finished, done, completed, phony. Who? Me? You? Who? Change, difference. Instantaneous. Look at the hair, the eyes the lips, the skin, the nose. Look at the face. Stop and stare. Unhappiness, dissatisfaction, dissapointment. Difference. Fast, quick. Phony. Ain't life groovie?

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Group K — James A. Miller

I began teaching English 101 with serious reservations about the original course proposal. I was disturbed about the extreme self-consciousness of much of the proposal and I was beginning to question some of our basic assumptions. Consequently, the first semester became an attempt to refine--and redefine--certain aspects of the original course proposal.

I was interested in discovering the nature of what Walter Lippmann calls our "pseudo-environment" and we spent a great deal of the semester discussing the ways in which various media helped to shape our responses to experience. This discussion was valuable in many ways, primarily because it opened up questions about the relationship of subject and object, perception, the forces which could possibly prevent an individual from perceiving as clearly as possible, reality, etc.--all of which was directly related to the kind of writing we were involved with. Our examination of the various media inevitably drew us into discussion of topical issues. This discussion of the contemporary scene provided a fine opportunity to talk about George Orwell's essay, "Politics and the English Language," political language in general, and cliche. All of the teachers in the group had agreed upon a general text, Modern Culture and the Arts, but only a few of the articles seemed relevant to the things that were happening in the class. I finally abandoned it. We used no other books and, while we occasionally went to a movie and read a few poems, most of the material developed out of the problems raised in class.

The entire semester was devoted to journal--writing and, while individual projects--songs, poetry, fiction, and drama--were encouraged, little was done outside of the journals. The nature of the class and the journal writing were new experiences for most of the students. Later, many of them admitted that they were not used to the relative freedom which existed in the classroom and, for many of them, the normal response was to allow the freedom to develop into laxity. The journals did appear fairly regularly and frequently there were some very good entries. On the other hand, a common complaint was that there

Group K (Continued)

was nothing else to write about; the result was rather dull prose. I considered the journals one of the more unsatisfactory aspects of the course, yet I still think that they can be a meaningful project and I intend to continue with them this semester.

The response to the Pass-Fail system was generally favorable. A few people complained about the possible effect that a P rather than a regular letter grade would have on their average, but most students felt that the new grading system reduced the pressure. Pass-Fail ultimately made things easier in the classroom. Students seemed to express themselves more freely, were more inclined to experiment with their writing.

It is still difficult to finally assess the value of English K101-K102 partially because we are still actively involved in the process of creating the course. In this respect, working with the other memebers of the group is invaluable. While our methods often diverge, we still share the same general assumptions about the nature of the course. The interchange of ideas, experiences and ditto sheets is an integral part of the course.

Generally, I think the course was fairly successful in achieving its original intentions. We are continually revising our ideas, however, and any progress report must remain essentially incomplete.

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L101-L102 Critical Writing

The principles which underlie this course are that reading should be regarded not only as a source of pleasure, but also as still the best way to understand another's thoughts, and that writing should serve as the means of conveying these thoughts. This is not to deny the importance of style or any type of "artistic" writing; we only wish to emphasize that the type of writing to be attempted in this course will be primarily critical. No one will be asked to write letters, journals, etc. We shall be interested in your responses to other writers and your ability to communicate these responses.

The course is planned for a full year. Since the course is based upon your reactions to literature and your ability to communicate those reactions, a rather "meaty" anthology, The Essential Prose, edited by Dorothy Van Ghent and Willard Maas, will be used during the first semester. (This anthology contains a variety of fiction and narrative as well as essays.) This will perhaps be supplemented by other sources, including some modern fiction. The sections of the course will vary slightly, depending on the instructor, but in all the emphasis will be on an examination of man's problems of communicating with himself and others. We shall perhaps set up a "team teaching" situation in which you will be exposed to instructors other than your own and their methods of communication.

The second semester will follow more or less the same philosophy, but will concentrate more on fiction. The advantages, disadvantages, and limitations of fictional forms (poems, novels, stories, etc.) for the communication of ideas, feeling, situation, etc. will be discussed. (Why, for example,does one writer choose prose as his medium while another chooses poetry?) Among possible materials are the works of people like Barth, Mailer, and the Black Mountain poets, as well as those of more traditional writers. We shall spend some time during the first semester deciding on these materials. In addition to the critical papers already described, there may be a longer study assigned sometime in May.

Staff: Abrams, Freedman, Gilfoyle, Pease, Watson, Willer

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Group L — Francine Freedman

When I began the semester, my feelings were (and still are) that freshmen need a good basic background in literary forms and traditional literature before they can validly specialize or experiment with new forms. My course, therefore, was a fairly traditional one, very similar, in fact, to last year's plan. My intention was to try to give the students, particularly those who had a poor high school English background, some appreciation of literature, as well as a sense that clear, logical, meaningful prose is not impossible and certainly not beyond their own powers. I tried to use the literature as both a pleasure in itself and a guide to good writing. I must admit that my prejudices as a literature lover influenced me to stress the former more often than the latter; but ultimately both aims were achieved with some success. In an evaluation sheet I gave them at the end of the semester, the majority of the students said they felt that both their appreciation of good literature and their writing skills had improved over the course of the semester. Only a few--generally those who came from exceptional high schools and had been habitual readers to begin with--did not see any increase in pleasure or skill.

With the above aims in mind, I decided to spend the first semester dealing with essays, short stories, and poetry--in that order. I hoped that by beginning with non-fiction, the students would get some idea of what their own papers could and should be like. After they grasped the idea and were able to write intelligent papers of their own, we could then proceed to fictional forms.

Freedman (con't.)

Unfortunately, the best laid plans.... Due to a mixup at the bookstore, there were not enough copies of the essay anthology available at the beginning of the semester. Rather than marking time until they came, I decided to do the short story first, and come back to the essay when the books arrived. This decision, although the only one I could have made at the time, was the cause of one of the biggest problems of the semester, which I will discuss later.

The short story section turned out to be the most interesting and valuable part of the semester, in both my opinion and that of the students. Whether we were all stimulated because it was the beginning of the year or because prose fiction is naturally more interesting to freshmen than non-fiction or poetry, the discussion that arose during this section was both informative and extremely interesting. Out of the anthology, Miller and Slote's Dimensions of Literature, I chose eight selections by Hawthorne, Poe, Melville, Chekhov, Conrad, Lawrence, Updike, and Hemingway. We discussed these in terms of themes, style, and meaning, sticking closely to the text most of the time. I found that the students really enjoyed discussing the experiences of others, that they were fairly quick to see significance and symbolism, and that they were very ready to listen to and argue with the opinions of their fellows. There were bad days, of course, on which discussion was minimal, but on the whole, I was fairly pleased with the results of the section. Their papers during this period were generally good, as if they were really interested in the stories on which they were writing and the characters with whom they were concerned.

When we turned to the essays, however, the attitude changed. Although the anthology, Van Ghent's Essential Prose, contains some excellent and provocative essays, I could not get the students to show much interest in any they read. By beginning with the short story, they had been exposed to the wide world of fictional experience, in which they could relate to the characters and hypothesize about their actions and intentions. The essay was therefore a falling to earth, and they were bored. One of them told me that she was unable to read non-fiction "because it is like a textbook" and therefore dull. Try as I might, I could not get them to agree that such things as the Adonis myth, Plato's Allegory of the Cave, and the letters of G. B. Shaw were worth spending time on. They felt, for some reason which I could never quite determine, that these things were totally unrelated to themselves. I think a great deal of this lack of response is due to the fact that the essay followed the short story; perhaps if it had been the other way around, the reaction to the essay might have been better.

In any case, when we went on to the more ethereal realms of poetry, the students again became interested. Once more they could relate to fictional experience, and they were eager to express their impressions. Beginning with the less complex poetry of Frost, Hardy, Browning, and Wordsworth, we progressed through Dickinson into the complexity of Blake, Donne, and Hopkins, ending with an extended study of Eliot's "Prufrock." In terms of exciting interest where there had been little before, the poetry section was the most successful. I was pleased to have many of the students tell me in the evaluation that they were now willing to accept poetry as a major form with which much could be done, when before they had considered it sissy stuff. On the whole, it was a valuable section, although the discussion tended to slack off as the semester neared the end.

Throughout the semester we discussed the relative merits of each form over the others, proposed some tentative reasons why one writer chose poetry rather than prose, or vice versa, and commented on the value of literature in general. They wrote six papers on a variety of topics, mainly non-literary and personal. I graded these on an A-F scale so that they might see how their writing was improving. The final grades were of course pass or fail; all but one student passed.

Freedman (con't.)

This brings me to the greatest problem of the semester: the pass/fail system. It did my class no good that I could see. The students themselves were about equally divided on the subject; half were in favor, half against, although they all saw both the advantages and disadvantages. Surprisingly, there was no split between good students on one side and poor students on the other; some of the strongest criticism came from my poorer students, and the loudest praise from my best. My own opinion is that the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages. I know, largely because several of them told me so, that the majority of the students neither tried their best nor cared about trying their best. As long as they got their papers in on time and came occasionally to class, they felt they would pass. And they were right, since I could not fail anyone who had completed all the assignments. Everyone did the minimum whenever possible. The poorer students had no fear of a low grade, and the better students had no incentive or "reward" (as several of them called it) to do their best.

Nor is it difficult to understand their feelings. With four other courses, all of which are graded A-F, why should they spend as much time on English as on the others? And why should they come to English class every day when they can spend the time more profitably (in terms of grades) doing the work for their other courses? If I were in their places, I would probably feel the same way.

Finally, I cannot see that the advantages of the system, in my class at least, were very great. The students whom the system might have made less nervous and more secure about voicing their opinions in papers and in class, did not make themselves known; their writing did not improve greatly; if they came to class at all, it was to sit silently in the back of the room and allow the more interested students to carry the discussion. Luckily, they were relatively few in number, but were still a problem.

With all this, it is easy to see that I feel some changes are necessary. Although I agree that grades are too often the goal, I do see the need for some kind of incentive or pressure for freshmen. In upper class courses where interest is often high and the students need little pressure to do well, pass/fail's advantages are great. But in a freshman course, particularly a required one, something more is necessary. Perhaps, if pass/fail is retained next year, it might help (as one of my students suggested) to have a "pass with honors" or something of that sort, which would give the students something to strive for. Personally, I would prefer to return to A-F.

Group L — Atalissa S. Gilfoyle and Janet Willer

The following is a minority report. After three meetings together, the members of our group found that neither their choice of subject matter nor their approach to this subject matter was acceptable to all members of the group. As a result, the group decided that each member should follow his own inclinagions, and therefore no further group meetings were held. The writers of this report, however, found that both their choice of subject matter and their approach to this material were the same, and thus their courses were similar to such an extent that a joint report is possible.

The subject matter of the course consisted of poetry and the short story. The choice of poems and short stories assigned was designed to cover as wide a scope, both historically and technically, as possible. The examination of each genre began with an introductory lecture covering a brief history, definition, terms, and techniques of that genre. The major part of the examination, however, centered on class discussion, the instructor serving primarily to stimulate and guide class response. In short, an attempt was made to create a seminar atmosphere.

Gilfoyle and Willer (con't.)

In addition to regular class discussions, we also made use of panel discussions. The class was divided into groups, each consisting of four or five students, and each group was assigned a general topic by the instructor. Groups were responsible for choosing their own moderator and for organizing the presentation of the discussion. They were given one class period to discuss among themselves and to organize their presentations. Each panel then had one class period in which to present its topic and discuss it with other members of the class.

Although little class time was devoted to elements of composition per se, both instructors, because they feel that composition is an important part of freshman English, required six two-page themes during the course of the semester. The majority of the topics dealt with literature and were assigned by the instructors. In each instance, however, the student was presented with a number of assigned topics from which he could choose. In the case of the one (Miss Willer) or two (Miss Gilfoyle) free choice themes, it was suggested that the students choose a non-literary topic for discussion.

No letter grades were assigned to students' themes; however, both instructors devised systems which enabled them to indicate to the students the calibre of their papers. Miss Willer used a marking system of ✓ to indicate an average, acceptable paper, ✓+ to indicate an outstanding theme, and ✓- to indicate a below average theme. Miss Gilfoyle used no marking system, but required that unacceptable themes be rewritten. Both instructors strongly suggested that students with below average papers confer individually with them regarding composition.

Because both instructors feel that critical comment is the most useful element of theme evaluation, each concentrated her attention on this aspect, including in her evaluation both specific comments within the body of the paper and a general critical summary at the end of the paper. That this method of evaluation was successful was indicated not only by the students' verbal comments, but also by the fact that in most cases their writing abilities improved.

Both instructors and many students felt the necessity for some means of measuring the students' progress in composition. To serve this purpose Miss Willer kept charts recording the major errors of each paper of each student. In Miss Gilfoyle's class, each student's paper, with an evaluation sheet for each paper, was placed in a folder. At the end of the semester the folder was returned to the student with a final evaluation of his progress throughout the semester.

Because both instructors feel that the students' reactions to both content and methods of the course are important, and because students have little way, aside from informal comments, of indicating these reactions, the following evaluation sheet was devised. Each student was requested to complete one of these sheets at the end of the semester. The results are indicated in the following pages. The first evaluation sheet summarizes student response to the course, while the second indicates the instructors' evaluation.

Summary of student response to English 101--Course Evaluation

Please answer the following questions honestly and as completely as possible. You may choose whether or not you want to sign your name. Your comments will not be read until grades have been submitted, so they will affect your grade in no way. I will appreciate your sincere criticism--you are the only ones who can evaluate the course justly.

1. Do you think English 101 is a necessary requirement? Can you see any reason for your taking it? What, generally, do you feel you learned from the course?

65% of the students felt that freshman English should be required. 25% felt that it should not. 10% did not answer. The principle reasons presented in

Gilfoyle and Willer (con't.)
favor of requiring freshman English were that: everyone needs to knowhow to use English (25%), it is useful for all occupations (20%), it is a good exercise in thinking (10%), it "boradens one's scope," (10%), and every student should have some contact with literature (5%). Those who felt that it should not be required cited as their principle arguments that: it is not applicable to all occupations (10%) and it is repetitious of high school English (10%).

Of the 65% who indicated what they felt they had learned from the course, 45% said that it gave them a better insight into reading poetry, 20% said that they learned how to extract more meaning from literature in general, and 5% said that it widened their awareness of literature.

2. Do you feel that your writing skills have improved as a result of this semester's work? If not, why not? Do you feel that there should be more writing in the course? More time devoted to elements of composition?

70% of the students felt that their writing skills had improved during the semester. 30% did not. 5% did not like the topics assigned.

30% felt that more time should be devoted to composition. 45% did not. 25% did not express an opinion.

3. Has your interest in literature become greater as a result of this semester's work? If not, why not? Poor choice of materials read? Poor teaciing methods?

70% of the students said that their interest in literature had increased as a result of the semester's work. 5% said that their interest did not increase. 25% did not answer.

The students reacted to the choice of materials as follows: the majority of students felt that the choice of materials was good. A few felt that the material was repetitious of high school, a few that it was a poor choice of materials, and a few that less poetry should be included. A few, on the other hand, liked the inclusion of so much poetry.

4. Did you find the method of panel discussions a valuable learning experience? Why or why not? Suggest any other methods which you think would be valuable.

60% of the students enjoyed panel discussions. 35% did not. 5% did not answer. The principle reasons in favor of panel discussions were: 1. More ideas were brought forth from the students themselves. 2. They forced students to take a stand on an issue and support it. 3. They brought out shy people. 4. The students were able to see both sides of an argument. Those who did not favor panel discussions cited the following reasons: 1. They felt too nervous in front of the class. 2. They felt that people on the panels tended to ramble in their remarks. 3. They felt that the topics were too general. 4. They felt that the moderator of the panel tended to dominate the discussion.

5. Evaluate the class discussion and your part in it. If you did not participate in it, why not? Shy? Bored? Unprepared?

In their evaluation of class discussion, 40% of the students felt that it was interesting, 10% felt that it was fair, 10% felt that it was boring, and 30% did not answer.

Those who enjoyed class discussion cited reasons such as the following: 1. It helped to stir up ideas. 2. They enjoyed the informal atmosphere of class discussion. 3. It gave the student an opportunity to express himself. Those who did not like class discussion cited the following reasons: 1. Students were too vague in their answers. 2. They didn't understand the material well enough to comment on it. 3. The questions asked by the instructor were sometimes too vague.

Those who did not participate suggested that it was either because they were shy, bored, lacked confidence in their opinions, or lacked motivation due to the pass-fail system.

6. Do you think the pass-fail system has helped or hindered the class? Why?

Gilfoyle and Willer (con't.)

	Above average	Average	Below average (students)
Helped	60%	40%	50%
Hindered	40%	40%	50%
Indifferent		20%	

Those who felt that the pass-fail system helped the class suggested the following reasons: 1. It removes tension. People are not afraid to express their opinions. 2. It removes competition. 3. It helps because under this system "no one knows how badly I did." 4. It enables the student to concentrate on knowledge; "The grading system replaces knowledge with memorization." 5. It helps those for whom English is not a good subject.

Those who felt that the pass-fail syseem hindered the class suggested the following reasons: 1. It removes incentive. (A large number of students felt this to be the case.) 2. It is only necessary to do a minimal amount of work to pass the course. 3. It does not leave room for recognition of the above average student. 4. There are no quality points given for the course. 5. Students tend to focus academic endeavors on courses in which letter grades are given. 6. A few students felt that under this system it was impossible for them to get any real notion of their progress.

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English 101 Course Evaluation--Teachers' Comments.

Please answer the following questions honestly and as completely as possible. You may choose whether or not you want to sign your name. Your comments will not be read until grades have been submitted, so they will affect your grade in no way. I will appreciate your sincere criticism--you are the only ones who can evaluate the course justly.

1. Do you think English 101 is a necessary requirement? Can you see any reason for your taking it? What, generally, do you feel you learned from the course?

We feel that freshman English is a necessary requirement. Recognizing that English 101 is a terminal English course for the majority of the students, we concentrated our attention on teaching them how to get the most from their reading of literature and how to express themselves clearly in writing.

2. Do you feel that your writing skills have improved as a result of this semester's work? If not, why not? Do you feel that there should be more writing in the course? More time devoted to elements of composition?

We feel that the majority of the students' writing skills improved during the course of the semester.

The majority of Miss Gilfoyle's class possessed average or above average writing skills from the beginning of the semester. Some of Miss Willer's students, however, were almost illiterate. Since it is impossible to devote class time to the basic elements of grammar and composition needed by these latter students without boring the majority of the class, we both very strongly feel that a fundamental course in grammar and composition should be required for these students.

3. Has your interest in literature become greater as a result of this semester's work? If not, why not? Poor choice of materials read? Poor teaching methods?

The majority of the students seemed to respond favorably to the selected materials.

4. Did you find the method of panel discussions a valuable learning experience? Why or why not? Suggest any other methods which you think would be valuable.

We found panel discussions a successful teaching device. Most students seemed to take an interest in their group discussion and were well-prepared for their presentations. The device seemed to be particularly valuable in stimulating the opinions of formerly reticent members of the class. It was also valuable in forcing the students to support their opinions with evidence and to formulate more exactly their opinions.

Gilfoyle and Willer (con!t.)

5. Evaluate the class discussion and your part in it. If you did not participate in it, why not? Shy? Bored? Unprepared?

While some class discussions were particularly stimulating, class discussion on the whole was not nearly as good as it should have been. This was particularly evident toward the end of the semester. In some cases the lack of participation can be attributed to the fact that the students simply had not read the assigned material. In most cases, however, it was found by means of direct questioning that students did have opinions regarding the material read, but that they lacked any incentive for expressing these opinions.

6. Do you think the pass-fail system has helped or hindered the class? Why?

WE VERY STRONGLY FEEL THAT THE PASS-FAIL SYSTEM HINDERED THE CLASS.

Our reasons for this opinion are as follows: 1. Since for most students the letter grade has always been the primary source of motivation, it is exceedingly difficult for the freshman (with all of the other problems of adapting to college life) to adjust to a system in which the traditional source of motivation must be replaced by a sincere desire for increased knowledge and improvement. As a result, he seems to feel very little motivation at all. 2. This lack of motivation was particularly evident in class discussion. Students know that they would pass the course whether they participated in class discussion or not. Thus, most usually did not. As one student suggested, "I realized the pointlessness of trying to participate at all because I would receive the same 'mark' whether I participated or not." 3. As a whole, students did not tend to put forth their best efforts in writing papers. They improved but not nearly as much as they might have. It is extremely discouraging to receive a comment such as the following from a student: "I dislike this system very much. I have heard so many people talking about just slopping together a paper to hand in that it's disgusting." 4. We feel that this system would work very well with a higher calibre of students or in an upper level course. Since the majority of freshmen are taking English 101 simply because it is required, however, and since many of them are not of the highest calibre, we feel that the pass-fail system for freshman English at SUNY/AB has far more negative than positive results.

Group L — Nicholas Pease

My approach to the course was a traditional one; it was composed of reading, discussing, and writing critical papers on poems and short stories. I taught poetry for the first half of the semester and fiction thereafter, assigning five 3-page papers and giving no tests. I chose groups of works which were thematically or stylistically similar, and for the first three papers suggested topics to the students based on these similarities. The topics of the last two were of their own choosing.

My aims were (a) to stimulate the student's interest in literature by making clear to him the ways in which a good poem or short story will reward careful study; (b) to compel the student to rise above his usually ignorant prejudices by writing objective criticism; (c) to get him to write clear, convincing prose, grammatically correct and including with each major proposition a supporting example or citation from the text. To help the student know how to was doing I put a letter grade on each paper and made numerous and lengthy comments.

To simplify the student's job, I made only two requirements for the course: (1) the assignments--reading and writing--had to be on time, although I allowed one late paper without penalty; and (2) the papers could be no shorter than the assigned length (longer papers were encouraged). I gave thoroughly-prepared lectures on the readings, selected papers, relevant topics from contemporary life (e.g., suggesting movies, books, campus activities, etc.), and writing techniques; I also distributed dittoed sheets which were to serve as a checklist of rules for eliminating minor but chronic grammatical problems. The

Pease (con't.)
lectures comprised about half of the class time.

The results of these efforts were very disappointing. Out of 23 students five failed and four others were questionable passes. While attendance (not required) was good and discussion generally lively, most of the students did very badly on the papers, probably because very few of them bothered to take notes in class, even after repeated admonitions. I sometimes dealt with rather complex topics, but ones with which I had had success in the past (e.g., existential alienation in Melville's "Bartleby" and Kafka's "The Judgment" and "The Bucket Rider"); and, because they did not ask questions or take notes, many could not apply these topics to other materials.

Early in the semester the class seemed to divide itself into two groups, one of which (about 7 or 8 students) took notes, understood the lectures very well, did the assignments, and usually read the material carefully. The other group simply did as little as they could. They listened politely but often had not read the assignments, or at least were unable to answer even simple questions about them. Among this group there were many tardy and missing papers, and often no perceptible improvement from first paper to last, even on minor problems which I repeatedly noted.

These students were not hostile or perverse, but simply very lackadaisical. I tried various things to stimulate their interest, such as putting the back row of students in the front, encouraging student-student rather than student-teacher dialogue, and asking for suggestions about topics and materials to be covered. After about six weeks I was so disturbed I passed out questionnaires asking about all aspects of the course. Nearly every student (20 or 21) expressed satisfaction with the lectures and my grading on the papers, and there were very few suggestions for major changes, although several said less time should be spent on poetry. And yet in 2-1/2 years here I had not seen such a lack-lustre performance by a class.

My opinion at that time, which was vindicated by a later questionnaire and of which I am now convinced, was that the pass/fail system was responsible for this situation. Rather than being an alternative to the five-letter grading system, it has proven to be merely a simplification of that system which discourages excellence and encourages mediocrity. A good example of this was seen the day after Thanksgiving vacation: I asked my class to write a candid (and, as before, anonymous) assessment of the pass/fail system; about two-thirds of them were solidly in support of it, and their reasons were the standard ones, piously stated (i.e., it eliminated competition and grade-mongering, allowed each student to work at his own pace, etc.). The remainder of the class objected to the system, either on the grounds that there was no distinction between just-passing and very good work, or that a mark of S did not help to raise their grade point average. The interesting thing about this episode was that moments after I had collected these questionnaires I discovered, by their own admissions, that about two-thirds of the class had not read the assignment (i.e., two brief short stories).

It was a discouraging moment in a discouraging semester, and I surmise that the reason is that freshmen have come to regard English 101 as a kind of fundamentals course, since it is both required and ungraded. This is what several of my students -- good and bad -- have told me. My problem is also compounded by the fact that in many other sections there is apparently no work required whatsoever, not even journals.

I am changing my approach for the coming semester in only one way: I will fail only those people who do not turn in all of the assignments, and on time (again, one late paper is allowed). However, slovenly work will be rewritten--several times if necessary--until it is good work. We will simply eliminate mediocrity. I was surprised and edified to see that seven of my first-semester students have returned, and I am looking forward to an interesting and productive session.

Group L David Watson

The course I taught began differently than the "group" course and diverged moreso as the semester progressed. We began with a reading of Marshall McLuhan's Understanding Media and a number of fairly exciting discussions pertaining to the relationship between author, media and audience--i.e., sender-code-receiver. In this context we discussed everything from newswriting and television to the methods of teaching and the cultural function of the university; we would, in so doing, sometime hypothetically vary one or more of the three elements and discuss the resultant change. For instance, is our response to a horror story changed by the media, or by another external element, such as place?

These discussions went on for about three weeks, after which by mutual consent we moved to reading fiction--here a fourth element was introduced, namely, the concept of persona. I think we all developed a keener sense of how hard the code, language, was working in poetry and other fiction, and also a sense of how the author manipulates his chose media and style to gain different effects.

My own response to fiction is frequently conceptual rather than intuitively appreciative, I'm afraid, and at this point I probably steered the class too much into considerations of such things as time and space schema in art and other matters like the presence of myth and its meaning, and various subject-object problems. For instance, we would discuss something like Shakespeare's Sonnet 73 from the viewpoint of time schema, reinforcing metaphor, regeneration imagery and finally, in terms of king myths, Persephone myths and even fertility myths. Then we might discuss Dylan Thomas's "The Force that through the green fuse drives the flower," or some of Keats, and watch for similar elements.

Concurrently, the class wrote about one paper a week, and tried to learn the techniques of inductive and deductive reasoning. I spent a fair amount of time writing detailed critiques, and the class responded well at first. The several students who stayed with the discipline requested of them wrote energetic critical papers full of ideas as the course closed. We read from Frazer, Freud, Jung and others; the readings provided a model for the various methods they were to use in writing, and also provided us with some of the mythic material and methodology useful in reading the poetry.

After the Thanksgiving break we read Yeats's translation of Oedipus Rex and discussed the play from a variety of viewpoints--e.g., is Oedipus tragic?, the myth itself, as a study of guilt and as a record of societal breakdown in the wake of broken taboos. We afterwards read, or reread Conrad's "The Lagoon" and Hawthorne's "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" and discussed the central oedipal problem in each. The final two weeks of the course were devoted to a reading of Orwell's 1984, a book which seemed to embody just about everything we had talked about during the semester. The course throughout was also oriented to problems in society, the place of the artist in society and other such considerations; 1984 seemed especially appropriate.

I will here mention the mechanical aspects of the course, that is, the "housekeeping" elements, because they have much to do with the final failure of the course. My main assumption was, and still is, that college students are old enough to run their own academic lives, and old enough to judge whether or not they should read something or write a paper. All the assignments were voluntary, as was class attendence. There were no tests, no in-class themes (excepting one, which will appear below) and no marks. I made it clear from the outset that no one would fail. Later, when there were sixty or so outstanding papers on the last day of class, I introduced a slight element of doubt about the failing bit by saying I wasn't sure what would happen to those who had done nothing. That was a stupid thing to say, and hypocritical on my

Watson (con!t.)
part; nonetheless, it got the papers in, with a few exceptions. Everybody passed.

As I mentioned earlier, everybody was quite excited for the first month or so, and quite delighted that everything was voluntary. They read and reread the material, and my teaching was almost inspired. I was tested a few times when they cut en masse; when they discovered I really didn't care, from a personal standpoint, a casual respect almost occurred.

The major turning point is hard for me to isolate, although I think I can honestly say they were first at fault. Most of the class was female, 20 out of 25, and most of the women were in nursing, and had a micro-biology course that met the hour after English. After about a month, this course had almost daily quizzes, and I saw very few nurses from then on. When "midterms" came, just about everyone cut for about two weeks straight and when they came, they frequently didn't even know the assignment, that is, what we would be talking about that day. I got discouraged and let it show, and completely lost interest in teaching. I didn't prepare very well, which made no difference, because none of them had read the material at all. I allowed myself to get actually hostile toward some of the nurses--they would come and either giggle or sleep or yawn in class--class was naturally boring as they usually didn't even have books. About five or six students stayed with the course; occasionally we would all be there the same day and have an exciting meeting.

Anyway, I got completely stale and they knew it. After the first round of tests and absences I might have pulled the course out of its downward spin--perhaps by getting tough, perhaps by conscious efforts to force the nurses into participation and renewed interest. Instead, I allowed myself to become partial to the few who stayed with the reading and directed the class toward them. This cute manuever on my part of course further isolated everyone else.

Toward the end, around the first of Dec., I think I got very philosophical, even bemused about the whole silly situation. From then on, things got a little better, and I shall even miss some of the better students. At that juncture, that is, when I got bemused about it (they were not, as shall become clear), I walked into class one day and was astounded to see about fourteen or fifteen students sitting there. Since the average had been about 7 for two or three weeks, I asked them what was going on. They were blank, so I asked if they knew what we were to talk about that day. No, they didn't--not one of them, believe it or not. So I looked amazed for a moment, then wrote three questions on the board, and asked them to answer one, if they wanted to. Several students left, but the rest wrote. The questions were 1)Why did you come to English today? 2) Why do you ever come to English? and 3) What do you think of English class in General? Excerpts follow: These were unsigned essays--in all cases, [sic] should be understood.

To #1: "The main reason I came today was to see if I could meet this girl who sits in the back of the room. The weekends in Buffalo are getting bad. I have gone out with the boys too many times, and I'm getting horny. Also as of late one night stands are getting dull, intellectually. I want a girl that I can really get emotionally involved with. It's been three monhhs since I've really had a good argument with a girl. So I am looking for a new adventure, and a potentially satisfying relationship.

I never really noticed her before. So previously I had been coming to class because it is the most satisfying class I have had at U.B. It really gets me thinking. Sorry I called you "it" Mr. Watson. This ain't a brownjob either. How can you get emotionally involved over Newton's second law or the Pythagorean theorum. Sociology is the only other course which I even give a thought to. To get right down to the point the science and math courses such I go into them and sit down and my brain slowly slips down from my head to my ass. As a result it gets all pressed out of shape, and I have to go to Soc. and

Watson (con't.)
especially English to get it back where it belongs. The math and science teachers could breath wind in your face and not give a damn. If you understand the material, great, if you don't understand the material, great, if you throw up in class, great. This is not to say that my English teacher cares, he doesn't. But at least he's honest. And by admitting he doesn't care, he shows hope. Thats why I come to English sometimes, but it varies."

(Needless to say, I never said I didn't care--I leave the interpretation of that essay to someone else)

"My main reason for coming to class today was to get a better idea of what the paper, assigned for Dec. 1, was supposed to be like. I thought that listening to what was said in class would make it both easier for me to write the paper and easier for me to make it a good paper. Another reason I had for coming was that I wanted to take my mind off the psychology exam which I have at 2:00. I think that I have studied to a point where I know at least some information and that further reading, studying or thinking of psychology at this time would just confuse what I do know, and would not add anything to my knowledge or understanding of the material. I also came to class just because I enjoy it--at least to a point. I think that whether what is being said in class is important, nonsense, right, or wrong, it still has its value to me because by taking in all the opinions and approaches to material I can improve my own thoughts and understanding of the material and at the same time I learn to have a better understanding for other people's opinions. I enjoy the class because it does allow room for a great deal of thinking--more than would ever be allowed in highschool. Even when the thoughts presented in class are not the same as mine I can look at them with a more "open-mindedness" than I was able to before. Another reason, one which I didn't actually concern myself with but one which I know is true,--is that I feel it's my responsibility to myself to come and that I'll only get out of the course what I put into it."

(The orientation committee did a remarkable job here)

"I suppose today and usually everyday I just come. Most of the time--rather all of the time I sit here like a vegetable--Sometimes I think I could say something just to get if off my mind but it doesn't seem important. Since I don't do anything why not? (come I mean)--

"Sitting in Norton can at times get rather depressing and here there's someone saying something of value which just might sink in. Half of the time I'm lost, I'll have to admit but other times the discussions seem to be interesting.

"Then too school isn't free and since I have to pay to get the credit whether I come to class or not--I may as well come.

"For a teacher you're not too bad--you do have something to say that you want us to know and being so informal (if that's the word) your closer to our level than for instance one of the stuffed shirts who uses notes. Notes, that are of invaluable importance, important to them only. If you ask a question that pertains to the material but isn't in his precious notes--you aren't going to get an answer--at least you try if we ask you something.

"The big lecture halls here can be quite something else and maybe the group being small helps to attract me to class. Maybe not on the other hand--but I don't quite know. You don't push us--not much at any rate. Not that the others do but in a class of 300 they can't be expected to. In comparison to high school though, this class comes closest in number. But its so unlike high school because you don't pressure us to hand in a paper or else.

"I like to read and lately I haven't had the time but when you ask us to read something I'm more likely to find the time because then its easier for me to understand what the class talks about. I can't say I like poetry but there's a lot of things I don't like that I have to accept and I guess for this course--poetry is it. Thomas was really good--but the "old-timers" can get me the wrong way. I'll have to admit their stuff is pretty good but reading it doesn't

Watson (con't.)
make me appreciate it.

"I just thought of another--there's this boy that's in another of my classes that has a class in this building and he sometimes walks me over--and then back to Morton which doesn't make it so bad to walk all the way here--besides its interesting."

"I came to English today because it is a unique experience for me. The class is interesting even though I usually have nothing to contribute to the discussions if you could call them discussions. I think I'm learning more about psychology than English on some days, but then I realize that the two are closely linked together but I still don't know too much about either. I said this class was unique primarily because I have never been exposed to such stimulus before and never expected an English class to turn out to be so different. I hope you don't confuse the "unique experience" with the cliche referring to beer, because I don't have those intentions. I really don't know why I come to this English class, when I think it over. Maybe I come to get something out of it for myself. Maybe I want to learn how to appreciate literature more or learn how to put my thoughts down on paper in a smoother way than I have been doing so far. I think I come to improve myself. I don't know if I am accomplishing any of these goals but I do seem to appreciate the class more, the more I make an effort to come and get something out of the class instead of wasting my time.

"In general, this class sometimes loses me at the very beginning and doesn't seem to improve as the time progresses. Sometimes the class turns out to be great (not really great but at least worthwhile) and I can honestly say that if I didn't come I would have missed out on something."

"I had several reasons for coming to English today, but probably the main one was that I didn't have anything else to do. I cannot leave the campus until 2 PM and I did not want to cut class on the pretense that I would use the time to study because I knew very well I would not. Therefore, I came to class thinking I would be able to absorb some knowledge, particularly about "Oedipus Rex.' My highly disorganized instructor had informed the class on Wednesday that we would discuss "Oedipus Rex," which is the topic for our next paper. Thinking I might be able to pick up some points for my paper or just increase my general knowledge of the story, I came to class. My instructor had other plans! He demanded that we students answer a silly question about our English course. I suppose he thought this was beneficial to our education, but I do not agree. He even threatened to give us a test if we failed to obey his wishes! Perhaps he has a need to appear aggressive and dominant today. This could be his way of showing us that he is still the "supreme authority" in the classroom, even though he complied with our wishes that class be cancelled on Monday. If this is to be his policy henceforth, I will think twice about coming to class again.

(The bit about threatening a test puzzles me--I jokingly responded to one student's inquiry as to whether it was a test with the words "It ought to be, don't you think?" The above writer may have caught the last few words and attached his own interpretation.)

"The first answer that comes to my mind is because I was not in class Wednesday. I should definitely make it up or help to make it by coming today.

"Putting aside the above reason, another question is raised, "Why do I ever come to English?" First of all, we, as Freshmen, are required to take the course. Chances are very small that anyone would pass the course if no one a attended it.

"Secondly, it is necessayy to bring out the point that coming to class is relatively indicative of respect for the instructor. It shows him that the pupils have some interest and may possibly enjoy the subject. But this is another point.

"Is is necessary to be interested in the subject in order to come to class? Although I find the subject and class discussions most interesting and enjoyable,

Watson (con't.)
it is quite possible that others do not. I particularly like the informal sessions we have; discussions are very thought provoking. Of course, there are times when things get bogged down, but these moments, to me, are small when compared to the enjoyable ones.

"Slightly off the subject, but of a relevant nature is the following: Is it right for the University to require a student to take a certain subject, in this case English? Although it is important for developing character of the mind, could one consider a required course to be detrimental to an individual? For instance, why must a mathematics major be required to sit through a gruesome period of English? The mathematician speaks in symbols and numbers, rarely through Shakespeare or Dylan Thomas. Why should he have to go to English classes? I therefore feel that the whole method of so many years of such-and-so before graduation is ridiculous. In turn it is not right to hold mandatory English classes. You should go to class because you want to."

To the second question, "Why do you ever come to English?", there were the following two responses:

"I like to read things and come to class to hear discussions of them, to obtain other peoples point of view. But that is not the reason why I come to English! If I could choose my course I certannly would not choose English because I am not good at writing things and not brave enough to voice my opinion in class. I know this is my fault but I still cannot overcome it. Another reason why I come to English is because I am scheduled and I am paying for it so I figure that I should try and get something out of it. Any education can be valuable in dealing with other people and in one's occupation. After all, you are educated and the things you say in trying to teach us should be of some value, even though we don't agree with you. In not arguing, it might help us solve some of our own uncertainties and bring out our real self.

"The two major reasons why I come to class are because I need the credit and because if I didn't come I would probably feel guilty about it, ."

"This English course is different from any course I have ever taken. Though I often do not understand or comprehend the material or ideas we discuss, I find class interestingly confusing. The teacher of this course is young and has new ideas, knows what is happening to the younger people of our country. Here is a connection to a world I have never actually come in contact with before.

"Furthermore, I'm at UB to get an education. I've worked for this and now that I am here I want to take full advantage of what is offered. Nothing is accomplished by skipping classes, educationally wise.

"This class is interesting. Perhaps, I come here out of habit, but also because I might learn or hear something new.

"There's no real pressure for grades. You can come here just to learn. The best part of this course is that the teacher actually cares about teaching and is actively involved with us. He doesn't try to force us to accept his beliefs.

"This course is interesting, different from anything I have ever known before, and is the closest thing to what was my idea of what college is."

To the third question, there were the following responses. I shall summarize the first response.

The individual reports that "I did like English until I got into college." The paper goes on to list the lack of time as the main reason for a waning interest, too many papers etc.

"In general, I really like English. It is a much different type of class than all the others we are taking. It gives one a chance to stop using her fingers and start using her mind and mouth (for something besides chewing gum). There is a more personal relationship among the class and there isn't such a formal air about the room. We get a chance to voice our own opinions and to question other's views whereas in all our other classes we are given theories

Watson (con't.)
and views and told that we must accept and believe them. I like to have a chance to question or voice my own opinion once in a while.

"Another thing that I like about English is that there is a variety in the work we do with reading, writing, and discussing.

"There are a few flaws in the class, but this is only natural. One thing that bothers me though is that we never really seem to come to any conclusions or even make any generalizations in our discussions. They are usually pretty one sided and at 1:50, they just stop without much of an ending.

"I must say that although I don't usually see where you get most of your ideas, they are rather interesting. I never felt that I was naive but I'm beginning to wonder. Somehow I just don't get the same meanings you do, especially about the poem we discussed the other day."

The general outline of this course, if it can be construed as having an objective at all, probably is centered about individual development in an impersonal university. English 101-102 has attempted to supplant instruction with familiarity. In this venture it has succeeded, the only question remaining is whether this shift in emphasis is beneficial, or even welcome to the incoming freshman.

"By deemphasizing the grade point average, and course directives, the English department has successfully developed a system of complete chaos--Congratulations. Sure its interesting to banter ideas back and forth with a familiar instructor, and there may be some challenge to finding the Oedipal complex in Bartleby but how can these hope to act as substitutes for a coordinated attack on some level of literature, or at a specific idea? So now we know that Dylan Thomas wasn't all dullness and obscurity. Big Deal. Perhaps an analogy would best illustrate my point. Over the past three hundred years a cycle may be noted in government - First there was the stability of the European monarchies, a little conservative, but at least they were sound. Then, after the American Revolution, French Rev., and disorders of 1849, etc., an increasing instability, anarchy if you will, arose in the world. Laissez-faire philosophy lacked direction and purpose and the incumbent disorders created an atmosphere of fear and even greater instability. Finally, from the turn of the century, centralized direction has reemerged. Men, after tasting anarchy in government, decided that a slight loss in freedom was more than offset by increased efficiency and purpose under centralized government. It seems to me the UB English Department is about 70 years behind the political realities of today. Maybe a horse and buggy is fun in the summer, but a heated, enclosed automobile is quite a comfort in the cold Buffalo winter. Take a look at reality, please, English Department."

"What do I think of this English Class? We have had some relatively interesting discussions here, but for the most part I think it's been a waste of time. However, even if many of the classes seem to be a waste of time, they are at least usually enjoyable. It's only been in the last couple of weeks that things have gotten a little on the dull side.

"I think many of the students find it hard to read a poem or short story, and be able to find the "hidden meaning." In many of the poems and short stories we have discussed, I fail to perceive how the teacher gets the meaning that he does out of them.

"Also, the classes are too unorganized. When we are discussing a certain subject, we seem to wander off to other things, not pertinent to what we originally started to discuss.

"Another thing is, either we (the student) cannot grasp how to do our assignments, which I doubt is the case, or it is just not being explained to us clearly enough.

"If I remember correctly, many of the students' questions on how to write a particular assignment, was answered with "I don't really know what I want you to write."

"Well, if the teacher doesn't know what he wants us to write, how are the students supposed to know?"

Watson (con't.)

"English in my opinion at the college level should be delving into literary works. The study of good literature. The impressions made by that piece of literature on the individual. It should not be a method of teaching how to write. What kind of style to use etc. It should not be as it sometimes is, do it such and such a way. The person should not be judged on how he writes or what style he uses but if he gets his meaning across clearly. A person who writes has something to say he should not be told how to say it as long as the general idea of what he has to say is clear. A person will form his own style of writing from the pieces of literature that he reads. Therefore I think English should be mostly reading of a college level. By reading alone one can increase his vocabulary and therefore express what he means more clearly. However on lower levels such as grade school English methods are necessary. The teaching of how to write how to read in a certain manner are necessary. He must learn the basics before he or she can communicate by writing with anyone at all or almost all works of writing today are in a conformed manner and a person must understand the manner with which it is written before he can understand the thought or material of the writing. If a person has something to say something worth knowing it is not how he says it but what he says that is important. stream of obscenities stream of obscenities stream of obscenities stream of obscenities stream of obscentities etc."

"High school English was, in general, boring because of repeated drills in grammar, spelling etc. This course, however, I find interesting because I enjoy reading; I like the variety we're getting with poems, short stories, and plays and, next semester, novels. Although I rarely participate in discussions, it is interesting to listen to what the other students have to say with regard to the reading material.

"The main thing I find difficult is having to be critical of each piece of literature. Because I am used to reading mostly for my own pleasure, it is hard for me to read carefully enough to be able to analyze the works. This is a major reason for my taking the course. I tend to take things too literally and sometimes get a little annoyed when all we seem to do is look for symbols. I realize, though, that the symbols and underlying meanings are often what makes the difference between a good piece of literature and a mediocre one in which the whole sense lies obviously right on top. It is good practice to have to write critical papers because it teaches one to read more carefully and digest more thoroughly what he reads.

"English is the only class I can relax in and therefore the most enjoyable. In other classes, if one is not concerned with a test, there is pressure to have in homework papers on time. Very often attendance is taken into account in the final grade. Therefore the student feels that his attendance in a class is forced. In this class, there are no penalties for missing a class. Also, if one hasn't done his homework, he can come to the class and gain something from the discussion without fear of being called on to recite when he has nothing to say."

These essays are not completely representative; nearly half ot the class was absent and did not write. I think I can assume that those who were there might have been on the whole more favorable to the class than those who were not.

My conclusions about the course as a whole, and freshmen students at UB, are as follows:

1) Most students feel uncomfortable and even hostile unless they are at times <u>told</u> what to do. They are afraid to be on their own.

2) Some students crave an authority figure. About five or six of my students were visibly upset about Jerry Farber's "Student as Nigger," and felt that students should not even think about having things their own way. They like to stay up all night and get pimples studying for tests.

3) Students at UB, for the most part, cannot supply their own academic motivation; learning for its own sake is not good enough. About half of my class

Watson (con't.)
"quit" when they found out I really wasn't going to grade them, and that there was going to be no competition in the class. It's a competitive world, they feel, and I had no right to deny them that thrill of competition (they did a paper on the pass-fail system--this point was frequently made).

4) Perhaps there should be more mechanical order to the course: at the end, when I implied I might change my mind about passing everybody, I got some superb papers; many of my students were gifted, but lazy in the knowledge that the assignments were voluntary.

5) In spite of the collapse, or near collapse of this particular course, I think I would do things more or less the same way again, and hope for better and more motivated students. I taught an American Lit. course this way over the summer with great success. I still believe that everything wrong in higher education is symbolized by the policing quiz, the exam, and the malicious authority of many teachers. Rigorousness and critical acumen are not incompatible with complete classroom freedom, in spite of what the one student wrote about revolution etc. Besides, students who need to feel that they are being pressured will often come to believe that they are; witness the several people who wrote about deadlines and other assignments as though they were fast agreements.

6) The pass-fail system must be maintained. I can hardly think of teaching otherwise; the mere existence of grades gives the teacher a ridiculous power over the future of his students and should be taken away from him, if necessary. One must expect failures in classes from time to time.

7) The reason I copped out on my class this semester is the class, not the system. I just don't think I could have maintained sanity with all those nurses in the back of the room not knowing why they were even there. For this reason, I would like to recommend that all courses be conceived in terms of one semester; that's long enough to face the exact same class.

Finis

A brief P.S.: While at first the students were violently against the pass-fail system, they were for the most part strongly in favor by semester's end. We discussed the pros and cons several times in class and they changed their minds. I certainly must admit this change as radical; perhaps the kind of thing I was trying to do takes longer than a semester?

M101-102 Creative Writing

This course, which may last one or two semesters, has a dual purpose. The first and primary aim is to create, or at least attempt to create literature--prose, poetry, or both. The second aim of the course is simply a ramification of the foregoing: to better understand what literature is by making it.

We may read several pieces of very current literature to see how other people are writing now. Stylistic examples can provide us with the points of departure often necessary for the young writer, until he or she finds a poetic or prose voice that is uniquely his or her own.

Pieces will be handed in on a weekly basis throughout the semester. The instructor will determine the total output relevant to the needs of each student's particular situation as a writer. Be assured, however, that the instructor will demand constant and intense attention to the work of creative writing, so that the potential writer will not be able to cheat himself through his own negligence or lack of self-discipline. Much will be required, but the unique dividends to be gained more than make up for a heavy burden of production.

- Staff: Albert Benderson, Dan Dorritie, Karen Johnson, Scott Winokur

Group M — Albert Benderson

The history of the creative writing program in Lit. and Comp. 101 is one of initial high hopes followed by rapid disillusionment. The ambitious plans which all of us had proved rather unrealistic when confronted with the limited ability of all but the most highly talented, or at least sophisticated, freshman to do creative work of any appreciable quality. It soon became apparent that the more ambitious goals of the course had to be scaled down to realistically account for the limited skills of most of the students.

This general summary of the course's progress was characteristic, I feel, of all the creative writing sections. Although we had few group meetings outside of informal contacts, and generally went our separate ways with regard to course materials and teaching methodology, the prevailing mood of the group was still clear in at least this one respect. Each one of us felt, with varying degrees of disillusionment, that the freshmen in our classes were, by and large, not yet ready to produce the kind of creative writing we had hoped to receive.

In my own case, I had been led to expect that my students would be capable of turning out some fairly good creative work by my experience last year in Millard Fillmore College. When I gave my students in night school the option of writing a creative paper, rather than the usual journal or essay, I was pleasantly surprized to receive some rather good pieces, including a few which were quite excellent. I naturally assumed that, when teaching students of supposedly greater intellect in day school, I would receive creative work of at least comparable quality.

From the beginning, however, I found that I was mistaken. Not a single paper from the first set I received was anywheres near the level of the creative work produced by students in Millard Fillmore College. The day school students, while intelligent and, in some cases, clearly talented, lacked the experience of the older night school people which is so essential to successful creative writing. They lacked both experience in life and in literature. Most of them had nothing to say and very little idea of how to say it.

Not only had few of the students experienced life intensely enough to gain a real perspective on it or had read enough literature to understand how to write about life in a mature manner, but only one girl had ever done any real creative writing before. While I had anticipated a lack of knowledge about how literature operates and had tried to compensate for it by assigning representative works

Group M, Albert Benderson - continued
by various modern authors, I hadn't anticipated what a great handicap this inexperience would be for the students, particularly when coupled with the absence of a background in creative writing.

This is not to say that the students were untalented or incapable of writing creatively. As the semester progressed and the students began to come to grips with what they wanted to say and, through their reading of fiction, arrived at some notion of how they would go about saying it, several decent pieces of work were turned in. Stories ranged from a rather well executed Kafkaesque tale of a man assaulted by a sport jacket in a department store to a rather conventional, but keenly incisive, examination of the loneliness of an old woman forgotten by her family and friends. A couple students concentrated upon perfecting one story all semester, with a surprizing diversity between various drafts. In at least two other cases the students demonstrated no noticeable potential until near the end of the course when they quite suddenly began to produce rather excellent material. In these last two cases the benefit of reading some modern fiction was particularly evident. One fellow wrote an extremely well handled stream of consciousness narrative, obviously influenced by his reading of Joyce. Perhaps the best work was done by a girl who began to turn in a series of highly perceptive character studies and short stories dealing with the lives of those who frequent a particular tavern in a small, isolated upstate town. Once again, the stories were obviously inspired by the work of Joyce, particularly the Dubliners, although they were by no means imitations.

As good as this work was, however, it was by no means typical of the class as a whole. Furthermore, even the best work lacked the artistry of even a novice in a similar course at the junior or senior level. Of course, my expectations had been too high, but a recognition of this in no way alleviated the disappointment. At this stage in their development I did not feel that the freshman were ready for a creative writing course. Furthermore, I became convinced that the syllabus was not really in their best interest as freshman attempting to learn how to express their thoughts and feelings clearly and effectively in prose. As I lost confidence in the value of the course, I feel that my work as a teacher was less effective. In the end, I was glad to have the opportunity to leave the course rather than compromise myself as an instructor for another semester. The change benefitted not only myself, but my students as well.

Any discussion of the course is incomplete without some evaluation of the pass-fail system. I personally favored this system last year and still endorse it, but not without some reservations. If nothing else it eliminates that horrible obsession with grades which possesses so many freshmen. I was pleasantly surprized to discover how many students were willing to work rather hard to achieve some goal other than an "A".

The elimination of grades places a heavier burden upon the Instructor, and rightly so. He can no longer be dishonest with himself and assume that the diligence of his students presupposes a real involvement in his course. If his teaching is neither compelling or relevant to the needs of his students, the Instructor will find this fact reflected more directly in the quality of work turned in, if work is turned in at all.

Curiously enough, however, I failed two students out of twelve last semester, which is one more than I failed all last year. These two students disappeared forever after a few weeks in the class. While this may certainly have been due to some failure on my part, I also cannot help thinking that the pass-fail system encourages those who would normally do little work to do none at all, perhaps under the mistaken assumption that they will pass anyway. At any rate, the pass-fail system tends to weed out, in this way, students who might have squeeked by with a "D". Whether this is good or bad remains to be seen.

Generally one finds that the pass-fail system is favored by the mediocre students. I have had old students of mine who received "A"s last year express

Group M, Albert Benderson - continued
relief that they did not operate under the pass-fail system. I have also had students last semester, who knew that they would have done well under the grading system, express disappointment at not being able to receive grades. Those who were most enthusiastic about the pass-fail system last semester were those who knew they would not have done well under the grading system. While this indicates that the pass-fail system may be an out for some students, it certainly does not invalidate it. Generally, I found no appreciable decrease in output of work per student last semester, except for the two who dropped out entirely. In fact, deadlines were met with somewhat more regularity last semester than before, and students who were genuinely interested in creative writing often turned in work when none was expected. Furthermore, the system, as indicated earlier, eliminates marks as a major concern of the student and places a greater burden on the integrity of the course and the instructor.

The effects of the marking system, however, are in no way related to my disappointment with my course last semester. In fact, as I have indicated, the results in this respect were rather encouraging. Having found that my expectations were too high, however, and that my students were not ready to pursue creative writing with the intensity demanded by a course in it, I concluded that the program was not in their best interest. Given the opportunity to teach a new section with a radically different approach, I finally decided that the change was in the best interest of all concerned.

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Group M
Course Theory — Dan Dorritie

A Creative Writing course is essentially a developmental course rather than a "content" course. Instead of trying to get the student to "learn", it must attempt to get him to acquire a sense of what is successful and unsuccessful in writing in general, and more particularly and importantly in his own writing. What initially makes Creative Writing difficult to teach, therefore, is the totality of creative awareness with which the instructor seeks to imbue the student, that he may become the assessor and improver of his own work. Obviously such awareness can only be built step by step, through careful critical examination of course materials. As it is acquired, however, it should be reflected in the competence of the student's writing.

But building creative awareness is not the only responsibility of the Creative Writing instructor. In addition, he must indicate, as required, sufficient additional materials to allow the student to discover new techniques appropriate to the development of his own writing. Although certain materials are of presumably universal significance, so that the entire class may benefit from their examination, personal materials are actually of greater importance, pointing out new directions for the student's particular mode of expression.
Implimentation - During the semester the class read Conrad's Heart of Darkness, some stories from 50 Great American Short Stories (Crane ed.), and most of the stories from Great German Short Stories (Spender ed.). The quantity of outside materials was limited in order to allow a thorough-going examination of each work. Class discussions centered both on these works and student writing.

Toward the end of the semester, private discussions and work evaluations were held with each student.
Class Response - Although the class of fourteen included at least one quite capable individual and several others of almost similar competence, most students lacked both literary ability and the capacity to respond to the course as taught. Coming from rigidly structured High School situations, most were unable to function in this very free educational program. Since they were used to being forced to learn facts, and had become quite good at acquiring information under duress, the

Group M, Dan Dorritie - continued
new situation left them without anything to grasp on to. Many were extremely lax intellectually in addition to being remiss concerning assignments. I did not, however, alter the nature of the course to accommodate the disinterested or unresponsive. To have done so would have destroyed the essentially developmental course conception.

The most positive responses were visible not in the classroom situation, where there was a tendency on the part of some students to use the instructor as a crutch and let him do the walking for them, but in the improvement in the writing of a number of individuals. I felt that several students had developed markedly during the semester, while others had made more limited gains. I further discovered that the personal conferences were very valuable both for student and teacher, and perhaps more important to the learning experience in this kind of course than what occurs in the classroom.

Marking System - I never graded writing, nor was asked to do so. Nor did I have any specific requirements on which to base a grade other than the receipt of a certain amount of acceptable writing by the end of the semester. However, the pass-fail system does not assist the learning process for freshmen, at least as I observed it in this class. Not only did some individuals modify their efforts because of the lack of incentive, but also, the pass-fail difference itself tended to be blurred. One would expected that rational, unenergetic individuals would have attempted to do a bare minimum to just get by; instead one found that a number did virtually nothing, and failed the course. It seems that a pass-fail course ought to be easier for students to pass than one with a regular marking system; instead it is much more difficult, even when the requirements for passing are quite modest. Last year, with a heavily structured course, I gave no F's or D's in two classes totalling fourty-four students; this year I was forced to give several. In one sense, this might be good, since many Graduate Assistants, including myself, tend to be very charitable markers and thereby allow students who do not really belong at a University to remain there. In another sense, however, the evaluative system that regular grades impose on teacher and student give both their efforts clear direction.

Another defect evident in the pass-fail system is its tendency to make students value other courses more highly than English. Just as such a system has been adopted for electives as an indication of their inferior importance to required courses, so also does the system impute a similar coloring to the Freshman English program. If that program is to continue its attempt at developing literate college students, it is hardly wise for it to undermine its value with an inappropriate grading system. But rather than return to arachaic letter grades, perhaps an Honors Pass, High Pass, Pass, and Fail system might be more clearly relevant to our educational goals.

Problems - It is very disturbing for an instructor of a Creative Writing course to have a student come to him and say, I don't know what to write about. Such a student does not belong in that kind of a class, and should have been carefully screened out in advance. But there is no screening process, and many who have no essential concern with creative writing above the infatuation level wind up in the course. Conversely, I am sure, many who do belong in such a course are never directed to it.

The classroom result is an unhappy one. Because of the great quality distribution among such a small quantity, one finds that only a few people carry the class. Though other larger classes may be able to absorb that inertia, a small class cannot. Twenty percent articulate individuals in a class of twenty-five provides one with five valuable assistants; twenty percent of a class half that size tends to bring the class below the critical mass capable of sustaining an intellectual chain reaction. The situation could be corrected if the proportion of bright and articulate students was altered by a screening process, but as it

Group M, Dan Dorritie - continued
stands, a great proportion of classroom energy must come from the instructor.

I am not objecting to small classes for "Creative Writing." They are an absolute necessity considering the nature of the course. But they must contain select, high quality students. If they remain mixed, it is better to increase them to standard size. One way to relieve this difficulty, I believe, is to schedule the courses throughout the day. Having all four sections meet at four o'clock is sheer folly. There is place for one or perhaps two meaningful select sections of Creative Writing at that time, but to schedule four, at the end of the day, has unquestionably hurt our classroom situation. Why are there no sections during the middle of the day, where they would appeal to so many more students? If we are to have a successful Creative Writing program, and I believe we can, the sections must be spread throughout the day.

Appraisal - Creative Writing is not a course for Freshmen. It is for those who have a fairly exclusive background in literature, who have written and are writing, who have the ability to respond to criticism of their work and develop their own creative awareness. These are not the characteristics of Freshmen, generally. They are the characteristics of upperclass English majors.

With these considerations in mind, however, I believe Creative Writing can be valuable, extremely valuable for select, qualified Freshmen. It can provide them with an opportunity to express themselves, a freedom to test, experiment, and even play with literature, that they have never had before. I believe that not to offer such a course to Freshmen would deprive those who have the ability to gain by it, an important creative and intellectual experience.

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Scott H. Winokur

Group M

The plan of our group was simple: have the students write poetry and/or prose fiction in significant quantity and on a regular basis; talk about this writing as a class; talk about it as author and critic (student and instructor). At a certain point during the semester we were to do two things as a group--hear guest-speakers who were themselves creative-writers, and put together a journal of the pieces which were, for any one of a wide variety of reasons, outstanding. In view of the fact that the last two elements were dropped as possibilities for the Fall term, it is only accurate to say that beyond a shared general aim, the four M sections never operated as a group. However, given the nature of the course--creative writing--maintaining a situation of interdependency was never considered crucial to our success as individual classes with individual writers.

My plan was to have my students hand in their manuscripts on mimeographable paper, distribute pieces for each class, and talk about them. The basic assumption of this plan was that as a result of the many courses available, the high degree and fact of choice, and the strong and serious wording of our course description, we'd get people in those four sections who were serious about creative writing, who saw our course as a solid opportunity, and who had at least experimented with prose or poetry before. When a kid told me on the first day that he was in the course because it was one of the few still open, and no, he had never done any creative writing before, and when kids started getting hung-up about whether or not they should "commit" themselves to poetry or short stories or drama, and on--it became clear to me that it was, afterall, Freshman English, and with its abundant energies, I also had to accept and work with its dumb-headedness. We ended up with about forty kids between the four of us (I was surprised at this low number); Karen handled poetry, Dan and Al both, myself prose. But of course these were only the individual emphases.

By the end of the semester they had written, on the average, six or seven pieces each. I wish I could add to this "finished" pieces, but, as I soon

Group M, Scott H. Winokur - continued
discovered, sustained and sustaining interest in a given creative project was rare with my kids. Obviously there's a substantial and demanding teaching problem involved here (one of the many in teaching c.w.); I don't understand the problem the way I'd like to yet--though I'm quite sure it's unique, I haven't isolated all those elements that would distinguish it from other freshman English course problems. Another way of looking at it is simply to say that interpersonal relationship involved with a student who is acutely conscious of the fact that he is contracting to make art, to define himself within limits larger than any he's probably had before, is a delicate and very important one: he's agreed to accept the responsibility for another self, an extra identity (I don't believe that expository writing does the same thing in the same time and place) which he's uncomfortable with; I've got to develop a language that gets through to both. I've been pretty conservative thus far in this respect. I think I'll be going further this term.

There was no "turning-point" in the course. It was a bit bland, I think. Sometimes I think I wasn't satisfied with it, though some of the kids might claim they were, for in terms of work-load they could abuse a necessary freedom. Frequently they gave me junk that they knew was junk; often they gave me nothing; often they didn't come. In a creative writing course when these things happen, when all's said and done, the instructor's passive and impotent, and it's no fun feeling like that. It must be put up with, however.

Of course there's also the problem of public language in c.w. There were some things I would have like to use--terms, names, stories. They hadn't read them. But here's something that you can't allow to frustrate you. It was my fault. We are going to read many things this semester. Also, the class was too small (8). Size is a factor, and I think five or six more would have been good for us.

The kids were interested, they did write, and we all could talk to each other as people. Some good, exciting writing came of it. Was there noticeable improvement? I'll answer that so far as to say that some of the kids have not yet had new ideas shape what was coming out on paper, others have. But they're all into it now, and even the least of them has an idea of what he doesn't know and what he hasn't been able to do yet--and that's respectable and hopeful in itself. I was satisfied with last semester. It was a kind of clearing-house for this one, and we're all pretty excited now.

Pass-Fail: Creative Writing classes have always (in my experience) been embarrassed by the grading system. The P-F things frees them from a old burden.

N101-N102 Scientific Writing

The primary method of this two-semester course will be to work with students directly within a scientific frame of reference. First-semester writing will be based on demonstrations, field trips, laboratory procedures, etc. In addition to helping the student develop a powerful prose style within the area of his interests, such exercises should also help him to evaluate his ability to interpret what he sees. This will lead to an exploration and use of secondary sources such as scientific journals, with the concomitant evaluation of their importance to the serious investigator. The amount of writing will depend largely upon the level of achievement of the individual student; those with a poor command of skills may expect to submit frequent written work until improvement is shown, while the student with well developed writing techniques will work on less frequent but more involved assignments.

Besides this practical goal, it is hoped to have the student develop an interest in books by modern scientists about their own related fields. Suggested readings: Jacob Bronowski, Joseph Wood Krutch, Giorgio Santillana, C.P. Snow, George Gavov, Isaac Asimov and others. Both fictional and non-fictional work will be read.

The purpose of the course is to allow the scientifically oriented student to grow into broader interests as a corollary to his basic interests.

Staff: John Borst, Mac Hammond, Eleanor McDonald, Valerie Scott

Group N — John Borst

I started this semester teaching scientific writing with one goal in mind; to teach students how to communicate better. But this assumes two facts.... 1) I know how to communicate, and 2) I can teach a student how to communicate. Neither of these is necessarily true. Consequently, I rephrased my goals.... i.e. -- to learn with students how to communicate better.

It has taken this first semester to see the development toward this goal. I started this semester by teaching the history of science. I rapidly discovered that there was no interest in the class. Realizing that interest does not generate unless a subject becomes a personal "thing" to the student, and that a student cannot learn to communicate unless given the opportunity, I stopped talking and only asked questions-sometimes summarizing the opinions voiced in class.

I then discovered that effective communication and an increase in personal growth go hand in hand. Consequently, at the end of the section on the History of Science I took a seat in the class with the other students, and asked them to decide what they wanted to do. Slowly the structure of the class sorted itself out. The only restrictions I insisted on were that they hand in a paper every other week, and that they then have a conference with me.

The class divided into two very nearly equal sections - as the class calls them, "the talkers and the non-talkers", - and proceeded to pick up responsibility and to formulate a goal. They decided to try to learn to communicate with each other and with themselves. Toward this end, we hold class discussions about topics they select - including themselves, current events and articles from periodicals. They also are voluntarily giving speeches. For the second semester, they have decided to try to learn to critically analyze articles, speeches and their own thinking.

I would consider the class to be a success because the students themselves come only because they are interested. Only one student has dropped out of class from lack of interest.

In conjunction with the class as outlined above, I hold a conference with the individual student. At these conferences, we discuss their essays and any problems they want to talk about.

I am optimistic about the second semester because I feel that the class as a whole has a desire to learn, and is willing to work for whatever they decide to.

Group N

Mac Hammond

The students of this course are for the most part pre-engineering, pre-dental, pre-medical, and, in a few cases, research oriented. The four members of the staff try to meet students committed to science with scientific material, in order to have them write about what interests them and thereby surmount that greatest of all difficulties in teaching the art of composition--an engagement for the student to write about. Each instructor conducts his own experiments within these limitations: 1) each section must read one complete text dealing with the philosophyand the history of science, e.g., Whitehead's Science and the Modern World: 2) read one text in a special field of the natural sciences, e.g., Mendelssohn's The Quest for Absolute Zero, The Meaning of Low Temperature Physics; 3) read a cross-disciplinary text, e.g., Hermann Weyl's Symmetry, or Konrad Lorenz' On Aggression; and 4) assemble his section for occasional lectures by research scientists. The staff meets once a week to discuss problems and share experience. The sections meet only twice a week for instruction and discussion; the third hour -- or more-- is devoted to tutorial instruction. The tutorial instruction differs for each student. If a student writes well, he is asked ultimately to pursue a large research project (e.g., The Meteorology of Snow, or Experiments with Ion-Propulsion, or Symmetry in Music, or a study of Proust); if a student does not write well, he is asked to write weekly papers on subjects of interest to him (e.g., a description and evaluation of his mathematics or chemistry course, or an interview with a research biologist, or a report on a public scientific colloquium, or a report on A Program of Poems for Electric Equipment). Guest lecturers are invited (without stipend) to address the assembled sections, at least three times a semester (e.g. lectures on Spartan Fortifications by an astro-physicist; An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science by a philosopher; Linguistics in Relation to the Other Sciences by a linguist). These lectures depend on the good-will of colleagues in other, mostly scientific, departments and serve the purpose of putting freshmen in contact with senior members of the faculty immediately and giving them a sense of on-going contemporary work.

Papers written for the course are not graded -- an oral evaluation is extended to the student who frequently will re-write his composition in the light of comments. The final grade for the course, for which there is no final examination, is Pass or Fail.

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Group N

Eleanor M. McDonald

In this section, we used a wide spread of material, from James Jeans' The History of Physical Science, to material so contemporary that it has not yet found its way into print. To some extent, I felt that the history was a mistake. The current material created quite a bit of interest among the students, having an immediacy which the history lacked -- at least, to Freshman students. However, most of the students said in conference that they enjoyed the history, "because it's easier to read than poetry." One of the objectives of the course being that of encouraging students with an aversion to literature to read, one of the objectives was, in part, fulfilled.

The contemporary material consisted of a variety of things. One successful event was a lecture delivered to the combined classes by Dr. Borst, who had a responsive audience for his illustrated talk on "The Secret Weapon of Sparta," a lecture based on his own "digs" and research, and complete with charts of analyses as well as pictures of the locations. Since this lecture was soon afterward delivered to a congress of metallurgists in Poland, my section was excited by having someone of Dr. Borst's prominence take the time to present this material to us. Although there was an initial hesitation on the part of the class to the idea of leaving the classroom for field trips and/or lectures from visitors, the discussions following these big lectures was always lively.

Other contemporary material used was taken from daily newspapers, magazines, and from current issues of engineering and scientific magazines published by companies such as Bell Aerosystems -- whoever I could talk into putting me on their mailing list. On occasion, I had teams of students working on concepts which we could compare and contrast: i.e. the "Science of Robotics" and "The Theory of Viable Management." At other times we turned over the implications of some scientific problem or "breakthrough": we spent more than one class period discussing the moral, ethical, legal, religious and financial implications of cryogenics as applied to human biology (i.e. the deep-freeze of newly-dead cadavers). It was quite a revelation to some students that there are moral, ethical, etc. ramifications to such problems. Inasmuch as several students asked me if we would continue this during the new semester, and suggested topics (heart transplants for one), I judge that their horizons are being broadened, that they are beginning to mesh into other aspects of society than what they consider "scientific." This would lead me to believe that another objective, that of leading some fairly specialized students into wider avenues of approach, was at least made apparent to them.

We used the writings of C.P. Snow (shorter writings such as essays) as a starting point from which to explore the relationship of science to our society. Not too much analysis was needed to expose the materialistic basis of this philosophy, and to extrapolate to the pervasiveness of this approach from the time when Snow was most popular, to the present. It's a hopeful thing that the students recognized the fallacy of Snow's statement that external nature had been "brought to heel," and had a much more humble attitude toward science.

Bearing in mind that the 101 course is to be a writing course, this section was kept fairly busy with writing papers. The class did three in class themes, all of which were based on material we were reading. Out of class, they did four papers, each of which had to be completely revised. The topics were all "free" in the sense that each student could chose his own, although I did suggest that they might want to write on some aspect or problem in their own field of study. There was an interesting range of not only subject matter, from the engineering problems involved with building the pyramids to the problem of euthanasia, but also of reaction to this kind of latitude in choice, from the very dependent who had to have a topic chosen for them to the very independent. The final project was for each student to work on an analysis of his own writing during the semester. I am using their own awareness, or lack of it, as a starting point for this semester's written work. Since none of the students had any glaring mechanical deficiencies, the main problem turned out to be dependence upon source material. It is an interesting commentary that two of the students who presented problems -- one dutiful and overly-dependent, one independent and undisciplined -- both turned in perceptive analyses, and both have since spoken to me about how they can "improve" their writing. It remains to be seen how they are able to handle this semester's work in the light of this new awareness.

This course was enjoyable to teach, even though at times much more challenging and actually intimidating, than I had anticipated. There's something much more reassuring about standing firmly on one's own ground and expecting others to do the approaching, than to have to do the fence-straddling oneself. For those who anticipate teaching such a course in the future, I would suggest a missionary zeal, plus a sense of adventure, to be musts.

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Group N — Valerie Scott

Although all four sections were aimed at the same goals, each of us used different approaches. In reviewing the semester's work, I shall indicate what our problems were as they arose.

One of the basic problems was a discrepancy between the student's conceptions of the content and purpose of the course and the teachers' concepts. We as a

group decided that the course would consist of the history and philosophy of scientific thought and the relationship of science to the humanities. We also felt that the writing assignments should not be an emphasis on the technical but on the logical, analytic and scientific. (It became clear early in the course that the students did not see the difference between technical writing and thinking and scientific writing and thinking).

We began by reading someessays about communication -- different kinds and levels of understanding, emotional impact behind words, hidden meanings; discussed an essay on science and linguistics. (Whorf) At this point the students began to have some difficulty:

> I found that generally the students did not know how to read. They could pronounce the words and read a sentence with the correct inflection, but the words actually made no logical or emotional impact. Their feeling of the sense of the words was superficial. I also found that the students often misinterpreted by placing emotional values where none were indicated, inspite of our having read about and discussed this very thing at the beginning.

In retrospect I would say that at this point I should have presented simpler material rather than continue. However, our books on the history of science were not in, and so we read essays from Santillana's Origins of Scientific Thought.

> From my conferences with the students I found that with only one or two exceptions they were not really interested in science and had only a token interest in their chosen field. Few of the students were thus internally compelled to investigate beyond the factual knowledge given to them in their science courses.

I had hoped that by reading selected areas of the history of science the students would find wider interests. Theoretically, too, the history should have provided them with a common background. The advantage of the book chosen was its thoroughness and variety. (Students interested in biology rather than physics could find the important developments of biology in the book.) The disadvantage stemmed from the advantage: the book was too detailed for the students who were not interested in the history of scientific thought. Approximately eight class periods were spent on the history. In an attempt to throw the responsibility for the class on the student, and in an attempt to give them a chance to develop their own interests, each student chose an area for which he would be responsible. Most of those eight class periods were spent on these student-led discussions. As with the Santillana essays I tried to encourage the students to find connections and relationships between new developments rather than memorize facts.

> Reading the history was a mistake. It did not provide them with a common background; it did not give them a sense of continuity with the future. The students did not feel responsible for the material, and it did not stimulate their interest.

The history was abruptly dropped -- literally. Although I invited the class to follow my example of dumping the book into the waste basket, only one boy had the courage to do so -- and that with much hesitation and embarrassment. The rest of the semester was spent in writing descriptions of various experiences and experiments.

One final problem was the grading. Because they were not being rewarded at the psychologically correct moment, the students resented the demand on their time, energies and brain. I do not feel, however, that the conclusion is quite as dreary as this evaluation may seem to be. Although most of the students had trouble with the beginning work, they did enjoy it. And at the end of the semester I began trying to establish a seminar atmosphere. There was some resistance, but I feel this was due to shyness. The students did not know each other very well, and in several cases did not know even the names of the others. I feel that next semester will give a fuller and more correct evaluation of the course.

P101-P102 Experiments in Writing

You can't teach it, but in our course we intend to leave the way open to disrespect for the king's english and for the king. And respect for your own english and yourself as king. To do this we must explode the classroom situation. The standard "teacher knows-student accepts" basis will be alleviated. Each person will, we hope, use the occasion of the classroom, to attempt to define his own experience.

Our texts will include the electric literature of rock 'n 'roll, impromptu development of play (writing, acting and jumping around), journal keeping, and any books that make themselves present.

The only pre-requisite is a feeling of responsibility for your own actions.

Staff: Lewis MacAdams, Duncan McNaughton, Hanford Woods

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Group P

Lewis MacAdams

I didn't work with my colleagues, McNaughton & Woods at all after we realized that all (each?) of us was too charismatic a leader and the group split asunder. In my class the basic text was Allen's New American Poetry anthology, we used that about once a week. Reading assignments and then discussion, really my only lecture, the only thing I could talk about. Another day a week was taken up by reports. Each kid had to talk about and play music of his favorite singer, group, song, anything. The purpose -- to bring lyrics of the best popular poets into public discussion, make them see the poetry that fills the ear in the car and while bathing, etc. Basically to make them hear (note slip of type sentence above). I didn't do this like an Episcopal clergyman "Like man, if you dug our Ellington Jass Mass, you'll dig the vestry." Not trying to suck anybody in. Only to bring them some of my favorite poets who they already have by luck of birth in late 1940's. Used the Allen anthology to let them know where the return to oral poetry began. Extremely moved everybody with the Ginsberg record of Kaddish.

Most of the kids were good when they realized I was serious. I'd say 13 out of 20 stuck it out through the whole class. A couple, I never learned their names. I told everybody the first day that they passed, which eliminated anyone hanging around for grades. Some paper topics of interest were "The Beatles & The Childe Ballades," which was a little literary, but brought wierd & certain precursers of "Norwegian Wood" and "Eleanor Rigby." Two or three good talks on Dylan, his work in general & specific songs. Mediocre stuff on Fugs, and Mothers. One Negro kid took up three periods with put down of white music and exposition on the Temptations.

The class wrote six or seven papers. Usually I just returned them. If they were really good, the author read them or we acted them out.

One of the most important reasons the class was a success was the circular sent to incoming freshman announcing the kind of course it would be. About 75% were there because they wanted to be. This also contributed to one of the biggest problems. Too many baby-hip kids from NYC who could not be shaken from their prejudices, because they felt they were just like me & no matter what I said to them everything was groovy. On second thought it's stupid to classify "the class" as anything. One of the things I tried to do was collapse the idea that anything unique or absolute was taking place, because our schedules brought us together at that time. I think I was actually a teacher to three or possibly five of the kids.

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Group P

Hanford Woods

I informed my class at the outset that all students would pass and only those who were interested should come to class. For the first couple of weeks I did not assign anything, tried to reach some sort of working consensus with the students in what we should do. The students seemed unwilling to take the initiative:

I assume I was not insistent enough in this regard. Eventually I had to assign a couple of novels to give a minimal sense of direction to the class. Throughout the term a paper was assigned for each week on a subject of the student's own choice, but these also I did not make compulsory. More and more students lost interest, partly because I believe the novels which we were looking at either did not interest them or intimidated them. I am in favour of the pass-fail system but think I was mistaken in issuing a blanket 'pass' to the entire class at the beginning of the year.

My class was not a success, but I think this was mostly my fault through my unwillingness to exercise any real authority in class, and through my own limitations as a teacher of freshmen.

I would prefer it if this report was not circulated.

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Duncan McNaughton

Group P

The teaching group consisting of myself, Hanford Woods, & Lewis MacAdams had no cooperative or familiar program for either last term's freshman course, or for the term underway. We've not met together, because the description of the course as it was originally proposed eliminated any need for either consultation or agreement. Thre prerequisites for entering the course were zero; students were advised to bring their own bodies, less attitudes thereof, and, possibly, some wit.

So I can describe to you what I did, and what happened, and as well, what's going on now.

In the first place, I wound up last term with an enrollment of boys and girls whose reasons for being there were one of the following two: the description implied no work & all play; or, their advisers put them in my section because what they had wanted originally was closed to them, or their programs worked out pleasantly to have English at eleven in the morning. No one brought any wit. The only thing that interested me was what any or all of them could articulate while they happened to be in the same room together. Like a posture class.

Everyone in the course had an author for the term, whose works they might, if they wished, pursue and expect intelligent help on from me. I made no papers and there were no exams.

The authors were Homer, Hesiod, Dante, Shakespeare, Blake, Melville, Ed Sanders, Lawrence, Pound, maybe a couple of others; one girl decided to read in classical mythology and that seemed okay to me. Two others wanted to make a play, and did so, and we finished, we three, talking about The Beard, and their seeming to be nicely bewildered & curious. They all came back this term, along with a few others who did end by reading a fair amount in the author they'd chosen. The rest died.

The way I felt about all this was that they could do as they wished, I would be there every day, which I was, and anything that happened was no more than that. I did plenty of taalking to them, mainly about language & words & what I think about Imagination. A few got interested, tho keeping a stready stream of inarticulateness up, and they've come back. As I say, it's sort of a posture class.

Last year everyone I had was given a poet, a "modern" poet, and they had to prepare a lecture to the class on their man, or woman, and submit a paper <u>re</u> comprehension. That worked out very well, because there developed among about half the class a really intense response to their particular poet. I left it at that, except to be a help to them informationally whenever I could. Robert Duncan Wieners, Williams, Jones, Sanders, Pound, Ginsberg come to mind, as being poets specific people got hung up with. Lawrence was another.

Now from last term the kids back are the Blake one, Dante, McClure, Pound, mythology, and a couple of more. The rest are new, in the section for one of the reasons I mentioned above. This time I am teaching a course, with regular lectures and papers. The booklist includes Olson, Wierners, Sanders, Dorn, Creeley,

O'Hara, and LeRoi Jones, about ten books in all. It is primarily a lot of talk about method possibilities, in any activity. And language. My belief is that words are the works, & so they are how we know the world, or what we mean when we say 'The world.'

I mean, a kind of dumb phenomenology which is based on particulars and language. The old Black Mtn. line, I guess, because that line lends itself to explanation pretty well. Jackson Pollock, rather O'Hara's essay on him, was the subject of the first paper. It's a pretty good class, so far as most that are left being very curious about it, or about me, I don't know.

They are shy, but mainly they are an attitude, and so there is plenty of insult again this year, until, if at all, I get, as I did last year, one or two or three specific responses. That's okay with me; I got one true one last year, and she's terrific. Maybe one or two this year. The rest is the rest.

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Q101-Q102 Connections and Possibilities

"'Creativity' is the principle of novelty. An actual occasion is a novel entity diverse from any entity in the 'many' which it unifies. Thus 'creativity' introduces novelty into the content of the many, which are the universe disjunctively. The 'creative advance' is the application of this ultimate principle of creativity to each novel situation which it originates."

--Alfred North Whitehead

End result of this course is to teach both student and teacher to SEE. By SEEING, one has only to be responsive to what one's senses and intellect find to be inherently true about the self within a given environment. This places much of the burden on the student (1) in his writing (expository, creative, journalistic), (2) in his reading (suggestive bibliography), and (3) in his reaction to the loss of the outmoded and authoritarian student-teacher precept. A fourth way in teaching the act of SEEING is to liberally use every type of media and examine its effect upon the audience as participant--audio: tapes, recordings, live music, poetry readings; visual: films, studio art (fieldtrips). The process of the course then will be directed toward subverting the students' dependence on external authority and turning them in upon themselves.

Staff: Dan Connell, Jim Hart, Jeff Nesin, Dan Zimmerman

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Group Q

Jeffrey Nesin

Any sense of motion or "what has gone on" like they say, would have to be more about my own personal movement than any group. I have trouble with anything beyond a one-to-one relation and a large part of our time together in class was spent establishing the possibilities of such regard for ourselves and each other. No texts whatever were used, but rather a sense of self as the text you must become at least "familiar" with. Outside materials were often used, requiring the least possible preparation. Pains were taken to keep the matter of the class as spontaneous and surprising (unfamiliar) as possible. Used Wichita Vortex Sutra for 2 weeks with Jim Hart--each of us reading alternate sections and commenting according to our own specific readings. Neither of us had any idea how each class would go or what would be said. Of the films we used, several were chosen at random so that nobody would know anything about them beforehand. One, in fact, turned out to be such a spectacular waste of time that Connell and I left the screening room after only 15 minites or so, leaving the other members of the class to make their own decisions. So the course proceeded, using films, records and poetry as referential and self as primary.

How it all turned (or is turning) out is as much a surprise as the rest of the program. The particular requests for facilities which we made a year ago were not taken as seriously or implemented as fully as was necessary, but the problems of planning in a multi-ad-versity make this understandable. It leads me to believe that a course along the lines of the one we proposed is not possible in a school of this size, although there are probably few, if any, other places with the money and the "salutary neglect" to make it all possible. Since the homogeneity of a roaring large family was not possible, the sections slowly became separate entities according to some secret Neilson rating known only to the "audience" as it were. I found my primary focus changing so that I could interest as many people as possible. This was not exactly pure entertainment, but it got pretty close at times. I found myself becoming increasingly bored and restless. This more or less exploded at the beginning of this semester when I found myself with 40-45 kids sitting out front waiting of the show to begin. So I am now going straight ahead into what we don't know by way of words (eg. mass, all, medium, etc.) and constant reference to such gentle men as C. Olson, E. Dorn, R. Creeley, L. Zukofsky, W. Burroughs, M. Jagger, B. Dylan, and all the others who present themselves as we continue. The spontaneity and surprise are

Nesin (con't.)
increasing enormously, the class size is decreasing, and I am feeling better and better at getting back to work.

Grades in any form do not concern me.

Group Q — Daniel Zimmerman

I am submitting an individual report, since my group (J. Hart, J. Nesin, D. Connell and me), at least from my end of it, and due largely to the scheduling of movies during one of my seminars (for which I was not consulted and, having voiced my objections to the time selected, found no subsequent accommodation which would have allowed me to attend), proved to be almost entirely incoherent and ineffectual. Early in the semester, we attempted a rather ill-organized and more ill-fated field trip to Letchworth State Park, as a sort of breaking-the-ice manouver, but few people showed up to go, the different groups never met at the park, and each of the groups was rather swiftly ejected by the park fuzz, who seemed to think we were plotting an orgy and refused to believe we were instructors at all, despite identification. Also, the large room we had hoped for, in which to gather all the classes together once a week, proved impossible to secure, except for the movies (all of which, save three, I missed, and the three I did see cost me two cut seminars). The selection of the movies (in which, again, I was not consulted, despite my efforts to get my hands on an extremely elusive catalogue, preferably in the presence of at least one other member of the group) was as unfortunate as their scheduling: for instance, Cocteau's Blood of the Poet was shown, but not Orphee, to which it is the sequel--a difficult movie, even with its first part, and nearly incomprehensible without it. Also, when Yojimbo was shown, it ran well over an hour, and at least half of the students left in the middle to go to their next classes--this not only made it impossible to discuss in class, but was quite disappointing to those students who had to leave, nearly all of whom were enjoying it.

While I was waiting for the promised change of movie schedule, I began teaching Cohen's Beautiful Losers, asking for informal reactions on interesting passages, style, individual ideas about the authors intention, etc. The almost unanimous immediate reaction was disgust at the book's "obscenity," so we got into the question of obscenity and censorship in general, decorum and propriety. Well, it turned out that many in the class professed to be deeply offended, thinking that I was using my pedagogic omnipotence fo inflict lewd ideas upon them (this was largely a cop-out, since the book proved very difficult to work with, or to write papers on--Cohen is largely a put-on, a kind of cross between Lenny Bruce and Mac Sennet--and so I began to work with more substantial artists, like William Blake, Charles Olson, Ed Dorn, The Rolling Stones, etc., asking the students to consider short quotes from Blake or the attitude of the Stones to their audience). We began to question why there is so much diversity of opinion about, to each individual, apparently obvious "message" in such "simple" things as popular music or Blake's minor works. My main goal in the course was to get the students to realize that they have been narcotized by their former education, and by the society of which it is one of the most heinous symptoms and supports. I began by trying to explain the psycho-cosmology of Blake and Gurdjieff, and eventually turned to the book I am using almost exclusively this semester, Gestalt Therapy (Perls, Hefferline & Goodman), as a practical method of realizing that there are different orders of knowledge and understanding, that they may be activated, and that real understanding of a given context, one's life, say, intellectual or otherwise, cannot be gained from within that context (unless it be the kind of "automatic understanding" described by Marcuse in One-Dimensional Man), but only from without, where it may be relatively more "objectively" appreciated (in the phenomenological sense promulgated by Husserl and Merleau-Ponty).

Zimmerman (con't.)

Since such study and realization is intensely personal, I repeatedly urged students to speak to me individually outside class, both about their papers and their personal hang-ups and difficulties in understanding and/or implementing the psychological techniques discussed. This proved to be rather disappointing, inasmuch as, despite attempts to, for instance, group seats in a circle, etc., the students were remarkably stand-offish, due perhaps mainly to the seemingly unsavory suggestions that we are not, when we enter college, at all adequately equipped to think in any but a one-dimensional manner, and that some real effort must be expended in order to realize and overcome our unnecessary handicaps, such as effective unconsciousness and image-addiction. So much for last semester. This semester, many students stayed in my course, and are responding much more freely, especially since I finally have acquired an apartment where they can come and talk over a few beers, as several did last night. At least one other member of the group, Jeff Steinberg, is teaching the same sort of course (Gestalt Therapy and Alan Watts' The Book), and we plan, for instance, to teach each other's classes and bring them together if we have enough room (which, it seems, we do).

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R101-R102 The New American Poetry

This full year course will trace the development of poetry from Whitman to the present day, and will concentrate upon the works of Eliot, Pound, W. C. Williams, Charles Olson, R. Creeley, R. Duncan, Allen Ginsberg and more recent poets. During the first semester, students will be expected to write critical papers. Once a familiarity with modern poetry has been gained, and the necessary historical background established, open discussions on poetry will begin. In the second semester the emphasis will shift to the writing of poetry, and its relationship to politics, philosophy, alchemy, dance music, and the visual arts. Critical papers may be substituted by those students who show no inclination toward the writing of poetry. Basic reading will include: Leaves of Grass by Walt Whitman, Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot, A.B.C. of Reading by Ezra Pound, Selected Writings of Charles Olson, The New American Poetry edited by Don Allen, and Allen Ginsberg's Howl and Wichita Vortex Sutra.

Staff: George Butterick, Robert Hogg, Richard Munn

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Group R — Munn, Hogg, Butterick

The New American Poetry freshman course was carefully designed and described in a pamphlet available to all freshman students. The course was purposely outlined in such a way as to attract only those students specifically interested in the study of American poetry today; further, it solicited students who, after receiving some background in the study of contemporary poetry, would be interested in attempting to write creatively in the second semester of a full-year course. Several factors frustrated the initial intent of the instructors.

First, only a handful of the students enrolled in 101R had made this course their first choice; the majority were unable to get into the sections of their first interest. Understandably, the classes were not as responsive as they might have been had the original program of student selection been strictly adhered to. Many of the students had only a slight interest in poetry.

The three sections of 101R used the same textbooks, but diverged on the point of concentration. Students were urged, at the first few meetings, to choose the section most interesting to them. The differences of approach might best be ascertained from the following individual statements.

Richard Munn:

I concentrated heavily on Eliot and neglected Olson; approached modern poetry through kinetics and phenomenology (dance, gesture and self). Our

Munn (con't.)
section is also writing a composite 'Book'--from hand to hand, paragraph by paragraph--automatic comparison writing. I believe that unless a section of freshman are completely interested in poetry, first choice, that one must provide a wider entre into communication and expression. I'd like to see the department prepare a brief explaining exactly how we, as grad assistants, get films, projectors, order rooms and etc. for special presentations. I don't believe that I want to teach modern poetry again, right away, would prefer to range around earlier periods for a few years.

Robert Hogg:

I began my course with a study of Eliot's The Waste Land, and moved from Eliot to Pound's A B C of Reading, and then to the lyrics of Pound and Williams. We also looked at a few Cantos, and paid close attention to Wms' Asphodel and Desert Music. Most of the writing done by students was on one or more of these writers. The course was conceived of as a one year course, and Olson became something of a central figure in the particular line of development in poetry I was tracing. Along with a study of Olson's Selected Writings went discussions of perception and its relationship to and influence on language in all the poets discussed, but especially in regard to Olson's poetic. The students were introduced to elementary linguistics, gestalt psychology and phenomenology as well as certain techniques in painting and cinema which have had some bearing on the writing of poetry since 1910. The students appreciated the simplicity and straightforwardness of WCW more than other works discussed. In a discussion of Allen Ginsberg's Wichita Vortex Sutra, they were able to understand the need for clear and meaningful language in the mass media of America; some were critical enough to want a little clarification in Ginsberg's language. The students were also required to go to most of the poetry readings sponsored by the university during the fall, and to be prepared to discuss in class the poetry they heard aloud. There was a considerable improvement in their ability to do this as the semester progressed.

Overall, I think the course was successful, though there were indications that the students did not have a sufficient background in English literature from their high schools to adequately partake in discussions of poetry since the turn of the century. Perhaps they need a background course in English literature, either as a pre-university prep course or for freshman English. This course would be no more rewarding than a modern course, I'm sure; it would simply prepare them for discussion in later developments. It would also be helpful if all of the students taking such a course did so by first choice.

George Butterick:

Less than one-half chose this course, for two it was their last choice, several engineering students chose scientific writing courses but were placed here instead, a few had chosen science fiction, a few children's literature. One listed his favorite poet as John Masefield, another E. A. Robinson. The course was perhaps therefore too ambitious for freshmen. Lack of "creative" writers sent us back to term papers. Point was to get them immersed in background & read as much as possible. Thus only Whitman, Eliot, Pound, WCW done 1st semester. Tapes were played, journals kept, students encouraged to attend live poetry readings (which were usually held at 4 on Mon. & Wed.--class time--for better or worse not decided).

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S101-S102 Experience and Environment

This course will proceed on the assumption that literature most emphatically does not exist in a vacuum. That is, there ought to be some correlation between what a student reads and his own life experience. It is not necessary to torture either the literature or the student to expose this relationship. The student's response-reaction to the literature should and will determine to a large degree the direction and content of the course.

S101-S102

The student will focus on the nature and extent of the above relationship in his writing, which will, it is hoped, concurrently enable him to discover a voice uniquely his own. Some of the writing will be in the form of journals, some in the traditional essay form, some creative, but all will be aimed at exploring the connections between himself and what he reads. The types of writing finally, will vary with the interests and abilities of the individual.

The basic texts for the first semester will be The Essential Prose, edited by Van Ghent and Maas, a poetry anthology, and a specifically modern novel such as One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Catch 22, V, or The Invisible Man. The choice will be domocratic.

Staff: Walter Gern, Robert Hirsh, Robert Nicholson, Charles Tampio

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Group S: Robert Nicholson, Charles Tampio

I Original Intention:

We were thinking at first of social problems, probably because our former students had complained of abstractness, of the irrelevency of literature courses. Most of us had a lot of science students, and understandably they were a little down on liberal arts courses which they saw as interference rather than enjoyment. Do so we decided that if we could engage them somehow, somehow show them that literature was an experience, something effective, that we would be killing two birds with one stone. We'd beat the irrelevency rap and also stimulate classroom performance. We figured that by turning them on to some social problems like race, politics, poverty, capitalist economics, international relations and so on, that we'd be fertilizing them, making them look critically at the information that they habitually digested and maybe work them into a frame of mind that would enclose literature, too.

We were also concerned with their writings skills, and all business we've mentioned above, insofar as it represents an input of professional and skilled communication, would be significant as information and as example. We wanted, as we said in our course description, to provide each student with a means of finding a unique and effective voice. We wanted to free them from the motion of writing simply as an exercise in futility. To learn to write well, or even adequately, we feel you have to want to say something, and a lot of freshmen are stuck with nothing to say. All through high school they've been in a sort of underground, grooving together but against the power structure of the administration, pushed toward college and with real urgency which they share, but without any sense of the intellectual mother lode they've been sitting on. They've been caught in the machinery of the ideas game without having any ideas themselves. They don't really have a stake in what's going on. We thought in our course that we'd provide them with something like that stake.

Our theory of teaching writing was to start from the outside and work in. We just couldn't buy the journal-confessional theory. By taking a completely artificial stance, by simply mimicking other people's voices, we hoped that they'd discover the inadequacy of any other voice than their own. And by getting good at imitation they'd be getting invaluable practice in writing. We hoped they'd assimilate the notion that tone and style have to fit content. We would call the voices they'd be mimicking personae.

II History:

We began the course with discussions on the nature and purpose of the persona, the mask of the writer. All writing is done in persona. As we replied to student objectors, even when you're being most sincere and most yourself, this is itself a persona. The first writing assignments were designed to familiarise the students with persona and the total relativity of it. Most of them had no experience with any written masks other than the personal, as in letter writing, or the formal academic (which most of them were more or less bad at) as in essay writing.

Nicholson, Tampio (con't.)

The first writing assignment dealt with names: choose a name, the name you'd like to have, and tell why. It was moderately successful in that it got them outside themselves, projecting. Also it gave them some inkling, which later assignments clarified, of the relation of tone to form and content. We continued with persona-oriented writing assignments for several weeks. Some of the topics were to describe an event from an alien point of view; then to describe an event from two different points of view. The earlier assignments tended to be descriptive rather than expository. Later in this early phase, we had them do a character sketch of the persona they wanted to take.

Concurrent with this writing plan, we read poetry from the Hieatt and Park anthology. We decided to do some purely creative literature in addition to the problem oriented essays and articles, primarily to give them some experience with poetry on a mature level. We dealt with literature on the basis of persona as well. For example, the "Irish Airman Forsees His Death," "The Love Song of J. A. Prufrock," Corso's marriage poem, etc. The class discussion revolved around the centrality of persona in these poems.

At this point the group began to dissolve. The class responses had seemed adequate to our expectation and the dissolution was due more to our own idiosyncrasies than to a failure of the method. Hirsh and Gern seemed most anxious to depart from the group method, and we all had to agree.

We had promised our classes that we would be doing some novels and that they would be allowed to choose them. But as it happendd, we were all so much excited by Malamud's The Natural that we assigned it as the first one. It was about this time that "Bonnie and Clyde" appeared in Buffalo and the realization this was Bonnie and Clyde year was strong enough to paint a new streak of interest over the course project. We became interested in America. America became, more than anything else the focus of our talks with the classes. That it fitted so well seemed providential. We worked through The Natural for several weeks, each of us getting different reactions from our classes.

It should be mentioned that by this time Gern and Hirsh were completely independent of the groups and of each other. Tampio and Nicholson continued to exchange ideas on an informal basis. So the history of this course as a group endeavor ends here. The individual instructor's reports will contain the rest.

III Reactions to Pass-Fail System:

While it is true that a number of students expressed satisfaction with the pass-fail system, and further that some worked quite well under it, we must emphasize the special composition of these classes. More than half of our students were nurses and many of the males were science or engineering majors. From their point of view anything that makes humanities courses less important in terms of their total grade point average is welcome. But while the pass-fail system frees them to a large degree from mark-worries, for many of them it was also an absolution from serious attention, which is obviously a mixed blessing. On the other hand, for those few (those very few) who planned to major in the humanities, the fact that they don't get any credit for their English course tended to be a bit of a drag on their performance. If the whole university grading system were placed on a pass-fail basis, this problem would obviously disappear. There remains the question of motivation. It was our experience finally, despite verbal recognition, that the more talented kids really need the token of a grade to motivate them to put out. Pats on the back aren't enough. Therefore, we suggest the inclusion of a third category to the system, perhaps to be called honors or something like it, to provide that kind of impetus for those who need it.

Individual Reports

Robert Nicholson:

My course tended to suffer from the lack of short stories, which in the original plan we had decided to drop in favor of topical material. I made a mistake in trying to stick to the game plan instead of dropping articles when

Nicholson (con't.)
interest waned and starting on stories as Tampio did. I felt I couldn't ask them to spend the money for the short story book, welcome as it would have been. I think, too, that if the class was appreciative it was appreciative for the wrong reasons. Most of them were girls, and I think a lot of them were reacting to me, rather than to what I said or what was going on. They laughed at my jokes, but they didn't, I suspect, ever share my interest in their country and what's happening to it and why. They seemed to resist any real consciousness or environment. It was hard to get them even to talk about records, and that amazed me. The turning point, I think was several weeks into the course when I stopped lecturing on poetry and they realized that this was not a formal class like the rest and that they didn't have to worry about marks or straight attendance and they just started waiting for the jokes (which kept coming) and forgot about the content which just skimmed by.

I'm not at all optimistic about the results of my course. I think it got sidetracked by Bonnie and Clyde and never made it back to the main line. In trying to be informal, I think I sacrificed informational value and finally due to lack of perserverance, I think the course failed in its intent to provide my students with a voice. I could never make clear to them that what was needed was an amalgam, a distillation perhaps, of the many styles-personae they were to have assumed. The project never jelled. But I retain confidence in it. Over a long period, with careful explanation, with firm direction, I am convinced that the plan can work.

* * *

Charles Tampio:

At the point in midsemester where the group began to disintegrate, I began to adjust the program of my course to fulfill what I saw to be my own class's needs. We abandoned formal structuring devices with the exception of the requirement of a weekly two page paper. While I offered topics and themes for these papers, I was by no means rigid. Every request to write on another topic was granted. As a result, each week I received movie reviews, short stories, poem analysis, confessions, essays. All I required was two pages, usually we spent the period following with a discussion of some of the problems in their writing.

We read some short stories during the later part of the semester at their request. They seemed to enjoy discussing them in class and occasionally they would write about them. Several members of the class expressed an interest in discussing albums. I spent a few periods discussing modern music and had the students, in groups of two, present various albums to the class. We talked mostly about Dylan and the Beatles and we all went to see "Don't Look Back." I was surprised to see that most of the students really were unaware of what I thought were basic facts of pop music. I had always assumed that they were going to teach me. As we listened to the record player in the artificial classroom environment, the students were forced to listen to the lyrics of many songs with which they were thoroughly familiar. They reacted as if it were a new experience.

At the end of the semester I collected all of their previous papers and discussed individual problems with them. I also asked them for a frank assessment of the course. Most of them enjoyed and felt some sense of gratification towards most aspects of our work. They also indicated that the poetry we had done had not much relevance to their own lives and was the least successful thing we did. I will be happy to give you these evaluations if you would like to see them. The most successful of our endeavors together was the reading of <u>The Natural</u>.

For the second semester I had planned a course with a certain amount of continuity. The arrival of a dozen new students to the class necessitated some rather drastic revisions. I do not mind the idea of a one year program, but this kind of addition seems to me the worst of both systems.

Group S Walter Gern

Our group (S) began the semester in unison, working with the idea of the Persona, in students' essays and in poetry. Our initial aim was the development of the students' individual voice through a self-conscious analysis of the roles they adopt in writing. The students began to discover some of the assumptions and some of the constraints they imposed upon themselves, particularly in formal writing. These discussions were prompted by the first essay assignment which required that students describe an incident in both an oral and written mode. An essay on names carried the exploration of roles and masks a bit further.

Most of my own discussions of the Persona came directly from the poetry, particularly the ironic fictions of Blake, Browning and Eliot. But to help diversify and clarify the idea, I gave a few talks on Persona in some of Bob Dylan's songs, and and also invited students to my house to imbibe the idea of a Persona in the Beatles' Sgt. Pepper.

It was sometime after the seventh week that I wandered off the track of the persona and away from the group. Except for Bob Hirsh, who continued to work with the Persona in Yeats' poetry, we began to feel the idea to be a bit intractable. From that point the group began to disintegrate. I assigned a number of essays on myth and religion in Van Ghent's Essential Prose to buttress discussions on myth and prophesy in Stevens and Ginsberg. We spent a number of weeks studying some of Stevens' "poems about poetry," partly because my students were so committed to "feeling" poetry as something utterly impressionistic (and therefore useless) and arbitrarily symbolic (pretending to be useful).

The natural conclusion to the discussions on self-reflexive poetry and myth was Malamaud's anti-mythic novel about the American dream, The Natural. The novel prompted discussions of McLuhan, an essay on "Bonnie and Clyde" and a number of thoughts about the paradoxes of the American Dream. Frequent attempts were made to tie this stuff to the attempted prophetic strain of Ginsberg. One additional item: Had one guest lecture on why mothers shouldn't hit kids who spill their milk. I don't remember exactly how it happened, but I've got lots of nurses in my class.

Group S Robert Hirsh

Mine must be a minority report since soon after the beginning of last term I became discontent with the group planning and, more essentially, with the proposal for "S-group." The failure of group planning--more honestly, my failure at group planning--resulted from my belated realization of what was to be the crucial assumption upon which I would base my teaching. The "S-proposal" does not contradict this, soon-to-be-explained, assumption, but instead, in its vagueness, allows for numerous alternatives some of which are quite incompatible. My mutinous behaviour resulted, not from a difficulty inherent in the system of groups, but from my black sheep interpretation of the proposal.

The basic assumption--my fall--from which both my technique and selection of materials arose is that writing is an artful and deliberate task and not a gushing forth of "real people." I decided to work from this basis after being faced with twenty-five freshmen this year, fifty freshmen last year, and one hundred and fifty high school seniors the year before most of whom jealously clutch to the picture of the "good writer" spontaneously "letting go" and easefully, in a semi-trance of inspiration, dashing off completed poems by the dozen. The tenacity with which they guard this conception is explained by the comfort it allows them. If good writing is chiefly the result of unrepressed explosions of feeling, then conscious determination to experiment with language and deliberate confrontation with stylistic problems are both mere busy work. I have met too many students quite comfortable in the notion that "some have it, some don't, I don't, so why bother." In order to combat this apathy and to discomfort as many as I could, I tried to teach writing as something you do, not something you are.

Hirsh (con't.)

My practical emphasis for the semester was on the deliberateness involved in the choice of a "way of sounding," a "voice," and the confrontation of the problems, ethical as well as technical, inherent to that voice. I tried to make each student weigh "how he wanted to sound" and "what kind of voice he was capable of making." In three private conferences, required for each of them, the student and I would discuss the choice of a persona (a choice which was obviously not final nor binding and which was made as often as the student felt he was experimenting with the wrong "kind" of voice). The writing assignments thereafter were sufficiently loose to allow each student to work with the particular voice he had chosen.

In the beginning of the course I remained in the rather secure confines of the dramatic monologue, an obvious enough parallel to the way in which the students were to be looking at their writing. I doubt I would start with them again. With one particular writing assignment, however, both the students and I found a much more encouraging tack. They were to write two short pieces on the same thing, one the way they speak and the other the way they write. The consistency with which they switched to the overly formalized style of the high school English paper for the written piece proved very helpful evidence for an attack on their cliche conceptions of the way writing sounds.

For the latter third of the course I worked with mimeo copies of Yeats's poetry and recordings by the Beatles. In each case my ulterior motive was to construct examples of men searching for a way to sound. Yeats's progress away from the Pre-Raphelite melancholy and in particular his rewriting or earlier poems was--in my rather selective presentation--intended to combat the impression given by the one or two set pieces in anthologies of a petrified state of poetic inspiration.

The Beatles provided a more immediate example of this process of searching for a way to sound in their moving from the adolescent love songs to Sgt. Pepper. The choice worked out particularly well both since the language I was using to describe the process fit nicely into a discussion of music and since my students had moved away from adolescence over approximately the same time span. They did not move necessarily in the same direction as the Beatles, but they did realize "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" was a way of sounding that could no longer work for them. They had to make a new way, with or without sitar. Nevertheless, no matter how fast they still might think Yeats dashes off a book of poetry, the deliberateness and time spent on recent Beatle albums is a popular legend.

The result of this procedure, as far as I can tell, was successful, as successful as I have been as a teacher. The students, after personally choosing, ie. personally limiting, the goal of their experimentation with writing, had something a bit more definable for which to work. It may sound like an old wife's homily that such an effect increased their attention to their work, but in a good number of cases that is what happened. To my surprise the approach worked particularly well with slower students with whom I had always experienced difficulty.

As far as its effect on my role as teacher, the approach eased many of what are most likely personal shortcomings. It facilitated my communication with the student and his with me about the writing. While students do, for the most part and with my encouragement, still write out of their own experience, we were able to talk about writing as something made, something out there. Saying "I don't care what you are, only what you make in words and what you want to make in words" seems merely to enter the problem of communication from a different door while forcing nearly the same self-examination upon the student. For me, at least, it is an easier door to open.

The S/U marking system seemed to work well as long as I kept the class interesting, though it did make it a bit more difficult to assign the number of papers that I did. On the whole, it made me demand more of myself which seems sufficient reason for keeping it.

Group T Childhood (1st semester) and Science Fiction (2nd semester)
Staff: Stephen Kamholtz, Pamela Ritterman, Jeff Steinberg

On the promise that literature is exciting, the first semester of this course is designed to take a close look at literature, using as filter the one broad area of experience common to all of us: childhood. By reading books about this "golden age" (specifically, Carroll, The Annotated Alice; Twain, Huckleberry Finn; Golding, Lord of the Flies; Tolstoy, Childhood, Boyhood, Youth; Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man), we should be able to discover something not only about literature, but about the way we see and understand the past, about the changes we are going through now, about what makes us tick. The papers will be designed to further our understanding of all these things.

The second semester of this course is mainly aimed at science fiction enthusiasts, but all interested parties are welcome. The texts will include Theodore Sturgeon, Ray Bradbury, Cyril Kornbluth, plus a selection of your own favorites. The papers will focus on the literary quality of the reading, and on man's place in the universe, variously understood.

Group T — Stephen Kamholtz

Sometimes I can't help feeling that I get more out of teaching than my students, or, for that matter, some of my colleagues, do out of learning. Each semester I teach, I come away with insights into the literature, into my students and their problems, individually and collectively, and into the current and eternal state of humanity in general. It's not that these insights are totally lost on the students, but rather that their lack of precision and relative inexperience (with the world outside of their parents' homes as well as with literature and language and the techniques of handling them effectively) impairs the depth and clarity of their perceptions and the coherence with which they assimilate these insights, respectively.

Perhaps the best starting point for this report is with the factor that proved to be the greatest disruptive force: the introduction of the pass/fail system. While most of the students were either ambivalent or recognized the system as a theoretical advance, almost all freely admitted by the end of the course that in practice it had adversely affected their performance. Their reasons varied from personal antipathy toward the subject matter to a feeling that the new system was a relaxation of the demands made on them by college. Almost without exception the problem hinged to some degree on their belief that a pass/fail system was in reality an all pass system.

A few of the students told me, this group privately, that it had the effect of allowing them to pay minimal attention to an undesired course. They had never cared for English and had only chosen the literature of childhood because from the title (they had not read the blurb) it had sounded like the easiest way out; they didn't enjoy thinking or writing either creatively or analytically--nor could I involve them by means of their own or their classmates reminiscences about childhood. As soon as they gathered that attendance was not mandatory they stopped coming to class; they handed in the bare minimum of written work and that only because I made it clear that I would not pass anyone from whom I received no papers. For these few, the pass/fail system negated the effect of requiring Freshman English; it gave the course a nuisance value equivalent to say, phys ed.

I dwell upon these because I feel it reflects the philosophical crux of the instructor's problem: am I to teach the course on a quality level appropriate to freshman year in college, regardless of how many students are intellectually willing to work at a reasonable pace, or do I teach so as to involve every student in the educational process, disregarding the fact that, by watering

the course down, I leave the brighter and more capable students disinterested or unstimulated? There is no question in my mind that, were I teaching other than a required course, I would gear it to the higher level consistent with the abilities of my students and advise those who were not willing to expend the effort in pursuit of this standard to find a course more suited to their interests and capabilities.

Even in a required course it seems to me unreasonable to dilute the process of education in the name of democratization. Perhaps some form of track system would be the best solution, separating the students according to their ability and experience, as well as their interests which the current system of course choice pretends to do. I should be unhappy teaching elementary reading skills to a group of local retards who have come to college because their parents think a sheepskin is the basis of a good salary, but even that is preferable to playing the magician, a juggler whose bag of tricks is varied enough to prove that English has something for everybody.

If this classifies me as an educational elitist, so be it; I do not think education is the panacea that will automatically equalize unequal minds. But this calls into question the motivation for requiring all freshman to take an English course. What is the purpose of setting a standard unless that standard has teeth? What is the purpose of identifying those students who cannot think, read, or write adequately unless they are stopped and made to meet minimum acceptable specifications before they are allowed to continue. The all pass system does not have the enforcement to do the job that should have been done in, if not before, high school; it makes teachers into frustrated if well paid baby sitters. What is the purpose of granting a degree if the recipient has achieved neither knowledge nor the technique for acquiring knowledge? All that democratization has done for education is to push the process of learning from high school back beyond college until the student doesn't begin to use his resources until he becomes a graduate student. What a mockery.

But in the name of pragmatism, there were problems with the pass/fail system that extended beyond the veritable unteachables and hampered relations with the average freshmen in the class; it even undercut the enthusiasm of my most interested (if not quite dedicated) students. Several members of the class felt that the lack of grades removed the bite of authority from attendance, class participation, and even comments on papers. They felt that the motivation to perform was greatly reduced and that, without grades, the strongest impetus came from a fear of being embarrassed in front of their classmates when they were unprepared. Very early in the term, a class vote almost overwhelming instituted grades as well as comments on papers (there was a feeling that I could talk about sentence structure endlessly, but that until they saw a C or a D+ they could not put my reaction to their papers in perspective), but this began to lose its effectiveness when they realized that my evaluation of their work was meaningless: whether a student got a C or an A was irrelevant as long as my final comment would be P. A large segment of the class was a cluster of nurses with nearly identical schedules and as the term progressed and they become more closely acquainted, the fear of embarrassment as a threat to their security wore off: it almost seemed as if there was a tacit agreement either to do or not to do a given assignment.

The better students in the class, however, indicated that their work in English suffered more from a lack of time and energy than from a lack of interest. Some of them showed a remarkable interest in the material and the discussions, but still felt that English was less serious, or at least less useful in the long run, because they had no grade to show for their achievement. They tended to do their English reading as breaks from their more strenuous study, and to write their papers at the last minute, when everything else was done. (The implications of this attitude will be discussed at length under the history of the course.)

Group T (Continued) Stephen Kamholtz

In conclusion, a pass/fail system seems not only to lower the tensions implied by grades, but the external motivation for working. While this system may be theoretically advantageous, it relies on a high internalized motivation or it becomes bogged down in the morass of its own apathy. It may be highly desirable in a highly selective college where intellectual maturity and strong individualism are the rule, but otherwise should be restricted to educational levels where strong internal motivation predominates, that is, where grades are already not the primary motivation to work, as for example, with graduate students or senior English majors.

Under the current system, it appears probable that the need for achievement will force me to reinstitute a modified grade scale. As it is tentatively planned, the students will not be expected to achieve a certain level, but will rather be expected to show a progressive improvement throughout the term. As I have not thought through all the details, I do not as yet feel prepared to discuss the proposed system in depth, but I do feel strongly that, due to marked deficiencies in the background and maturity of the freshmen I have had contact with at Buffalo, some form of authoritarian incentive is necessary. I have found support for this notion in discussions with numerous of my colleagues; they favored a stricter system by better than two to one.

The other major innovation in Freshman English, the cell system, had rather little effect on the teaching of my section, largely, but not entirely, because various circumstances hindered its implementation. Its greatest adverse effects were felt at the initial organizational level: the course I proposed had several interested supporters, all of whom for reasons of ease or prior commitment were unwilling to subscribe; I was eventually joined by two incoming graduate students, one of whom I knew only superficially and the other not at all. With the first I met erratically, agreeing to cover the same material from disparate approaches until eventually we followed separate paths entirely. The other transferred during the second week and I conferred sporadically throughout the term with her replacement. We occasionally exchanged useful ideas, particularly with regard to papers, but the sections were of vastly different ability (hers superior) and the loss of two weeks made it impossible to coordinate material.

Disregarding the obstacles I experienced in its practical application, I do not feel that the cell system as a universal process aids in the teaching of Freshman English. While it undoubtedly offers invaluable aid to the inexperienced teacher, and should certainly be an available option for all others who desire it, its requirement seems to inhibit rather than stimulate good teaching practice. On the one hand it may dampen the individuality of experimentation: under the system, for me to be allowed to use the materials and the techniques that my mind commends, I have to find at least two others who agree to teach what I do as I do. This means they must either have the same brainstorms I do, or be willing for one reason or other to follow my example (which implies that they are not following their own convictions). Suppose several teachers agree on what materials to use; they form a group. Suppose that each believes in a technique (different), that is internally coherent. Agreement implies compromise, but compromise implies inconsistancy. Is a course really invalid if only one person champions it?

On the other hand the system is supposed to produce frequent meetings which provide internal corroboration. In my experience (and I gather that of my colleagues), they don't. Except for the three large courses, meetings don't happen, and when they do they merely produce agreement that freshmen can be awfully dumb. But I've met with my colleagues, teaching totally different courses, and as we discuss the human condition (or maybe the student condition) we lay ideas; and each of us assimilates them in different ways and goes back

to his class with a new twist or insight. But we would never agree to teach the same material, or to use the same techniques. Perhaps learning is a product of the conflict of different ideas, rather than the channeling of similar ones.

The course was intended as a broad introduction to English, and as such was geared toward personal improvement in reading, writing, and thinking, and understanding the relations of child/adult, past/present, and individual/world, as well as appreciating all sorts of paradoxes. It generated the appearance of success, though not spectacularly so. Some students I could never reach; to them I was the teacher, and as such had no bearing on their real world. Others were really turned on to the world and spent time following out the ramifications of slight hints. Ask me again in five years.

The Annotated Alice was an ideal first text on several grounds: universal familiarity (at least with Disney's film), relative simplicity of language, diversity and consistency of imagery, facility of imagination, and profundity. We read the book analytically in as much depth as three and a half weeks would allow, mixing lecture and discussion. The first assignment was to trace and explain any single theme, image, or motif of the student's choice throughout either book. The results were as horrible as expected, barely intelligible ideas mangled in language that would make a bright grade schooler shudder. I gave detailed comments on style and procedure, and directions as to how they should rewrite. The second versions were vastly improved...well, generally. It took much coaching to bring them to the point of relating Alice to their own childhoods...here as in Huck Finn we ran afoul of all that flak society throws up as to what kids should be. We rejected the simplistic Freudian interpretation of Alice, but not without looking at Freud's definition of polymorphously perverse. I was rather surprised to find that they had no idea ta all of what Freud was about, except that "it had something to do with sex."

We discussed Huck Finn in the context of the American Dream, both historically and in relation to current politics. I found it difficult to wean them away from the grand generalization of ideals, which I could only do by discussing the morning's news and restricting them to the ungarnished specifics. After reaching some level of embarrassed honesty about life as it is lived from day to day, we were able to relate Huck's adventures and prognostications to our own childhoods. Out attempts to examine the book as literature were haphazard at best, the difficulties compounded by misunderstanding an exerpt from Fiedler's Love and Death in the American Novel. The paper topic was very general, an attempt to have them come to grips with the book as a whole through a discussion of the ... character of Huck. Although I did not expect anything above the level of a high school book report, the results were exceedingly poor: many of them never read the entire book, and some hadn't opened it in several years. It was at this point that even the better students confessed that the pass/fail system lowered their incentive to work. I lost my cool (although I gather I didn't show it) and had a stern lecture-discussion on the purposes of going to college and the rigors of education.

Lord of the Flies presented two interesting problems. With a little bit of coaching we had no trouble realizing its lack of literary merit. It did, however, provide an easy argument in favor of the presence of allegory and symbolism, to which I had a few objectors (but not the strenuous disbelievers I had in Spring 1967). The other problem was that of material: no one in the class liked, and therefore no one agreed with, Golding's view of life. This provided a good opportunity to assign a creative paper: they were to take a group of people of their choice and put them in similar isolation, and then write a story, or the outline of a story, explaining how they established a society and how it worked. They were encouraged to ignore situational details (for example, I didn't care how they provided for the group's arrival or sustainence), and dwell upon how they replaced authority from doctrine, experience, and organization (religion, education, and government, in their broadest senses), and how they

Group T (Continued) Stephen Kamholtz

handled crises. Of course, for all that, they solved these problems by avoiding them and buried themselves in the mechanics of situation. I returned these papers with individual conferences, discussing with each possible ways of dealing with the problem; I consider it a success that I was able to coax each one to come to some sort of grip with the elemental groundrules of society, even if only momentarily.

Childhood was dealt with hastily, due primarily to lack of time. The opening paragraphs were examined closely in three different translations, exposing the difficulties of dealing with a piece of literature in other than its original language. The book was mostly used as a foil for Portrait and the term paper was to write a comparison of the two books on any aspect they thought relevant.

A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man presented difficulties on the elementary level of comprehension, and much time was spent in clarification of the narrative line. This was followed by an extended discussion of character and narrative consciousness, which was in turn related to all the previous reading and personal experience (and the meaning of life and all that). The term papers, which were due the last week of class, suffered from the pressure of final exams, but in general showed a depth of perception far greater than that shown at the beginning of the semester. These, too, were returned with personal conferences. Although there were two or three real losers, in the end I only flunked the two students who didn't turn in the term paper; neither had been to class more than once in the last month.

We concluded the course with a discussion of Manchild in the Promised Land, barely sketching the outline of possible approaches: literary, sociological, psychological. We brought childhood into focus as questions of innocence/experience, pleasure/responsibility, dream/reality, and so forth. We culminated with a summation of the running themes in the course, changing by growing, awareness of death, isolation by fantasy, socialization by emasculation, education by concretization, and devaluation by commercialization.

One more point remains of note: considering the failure of the pass/fail system to provide external motivation, considering the lack of internal motivation (especially in the light of inadequacy of the general background), considering the ungodliness of the hour, I was pleasantly surprised at the regularity of attendance. At least three quarters of the students came most of the time, fully half of whom missed fewer than five classes. (I cancelled one class and established two extra classes for a total of five extra class hours). Since no record was kept, I can only conclude that the students were apparently interested in the discussions and lectures beyond their willingness to participate.

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Group T Pamela Ritterman

The name of the course was "The Literature of Childhood." The basic reading list was: The Annotated Alice, Huckleberry Finn; Childhood, Boyhood, Youth (Tolstoy); Portrait of the Artist; Lord of the Flies; Manchild in the Promised Land. I made up neither the title of the reading list, but I profited from their main advantage. That is, this course seemed to attract those students who would like to call themselves "sensitive." These are the students who, for example, have suddenly discovered that being basically unpopular during their childhoods was indicative, not of basic unattractiveness, as they had formerly thought, but rather, of something that becomes called "sensitivity." While not a value in itself, this rather mawkish frame of mind usually does go to characterize some of the more intelligent freshmen of a university. In short, I had no nurses in my class. And in Huck Finn's parlance, "I am rotten glad of it."

Most of my students could write pretty well, although a lot of their writing

Group T (Continued) Pamela Ritterman

was in typical high school essay form. If I taught them anything, I hope I taught them never to end a paper by telling me what a rewarding experience it was to write it. There was just one problem vis-a-vis writing in the class: one very bright girl whose papers looked like lists of intelligent ideas tumbling over one another. I didn't really know what to do with her except to keep telling her to take deep breaths and complete her sentences occasionally. Her last paper is rather clearer, so maybe this sort of thing is improved by practice.

The four papers assigned all had to do with the books that they read in class, and the classes almost always had to do with the books (and occasional extra mimeographed material--poems, essays, and such, which related to the subject matter.) Most of the class thought that this was a rather good way to run the thing--some of them said they could groove the Stones and Dylan back in the dorm just fine and liked reading books in their English course. The course came as close to a straight lecture as it ever did when we read Portrait. I didn't mind; it's a damned hard book, and if all they could think of to say about it first time around was "who's Parnell?" I really didn't expect much more Basically, I talked more than they did in class. Basically, I knew more about literature than they did.

The main points around which I structured the course were as follows:

I--One may look at the subject of childhood in terms of what seems to me to be a dichotomy in modern thought about childhood: the child as innocent (we read some Wordsworth), the child in process of being socialized (we read some Freud). (This was all pretty relevant to Lord of the Flies.)

II--The above dichotomy seems to take its specifically literary form in the following dichotomy: childhood as a state seen from outside (Alice, Huck); childhood as a process, seen from inside the process (books that were more generally autobiographical: Portrait, Tolstory, Manchild).

III--Specifically literary problems having to do with structure, point of view, irony--the novel as it is constructed in terms of cognition. (Unfortunately, the second dichotomy, which is in my opinion, rather the more interesting and more important of the two, only occured to me halfway through the course, so I don't know how well it came across.)

About the pass-fail system: I asked the class what they thought of it, and the results weren't particularly helpful. About half approved, and about half disapproved. Those who approved said that they were working as hard as they normally would, and that it was nice to be relieved of the pressure of grades. Their papers usually showed effort and thought. The other half gave the old "no incentive" story--their papers showed it, too. I often gave grades, partly because I found that grades are a language that students understand very well. I had a fairly long conference with one boy about one of his papers, telling him at length what I liked about it and what I didn't (this kid may be the only person in the history of literature to refer to Stephen Dedalus as "Steve"). He looked pretty bewildered by it all, and finally asked me what grade I thought the paper deserved. I told him "C", and I could see the dawn of understanding in his face. Now he understood what I thought about his paper.

About working in a group. I often exchanged reports on what I was doing with one of the other members of the group (there were three members in the group). I don't think this exchange of ideas particularly influenced the way either of us taught our classes, although I did get some ideas for paper topics to assign. The main advantage of the group set-up for me was that we sometimes mimeographed extra material that we found, for each other's classes.

Group T

Jeff Steinberg

9 a.m. Trailer 7 (the trailer complex SUNY B)--Fall 67:

A longhaired fringe type--c. 21 yrs. old walks in--asks class if this is Mr. Steinberg's freshman English section; they say yes--he says "good, sit down, I'm your teacher." From the 1st a kind of experiment & exercise in posture/balance /contact/community.

From the semester's experience I would stress the importance of balance, that is it is important for the teacher to give cues of structure & pace--in some sense set the stage. E.g. I spent the first few minutes of the 1st session at a rather straight activity: having the class fill out schedule cards, listing their major, interests, etc. This functioned as a kind of shift--gave me time to size up the class; allowed their individual reactions to my appearance to set while I took control--in other words although I was later to engage them in what I consider to be a radical exercise in teaching, I wanted to establish a kind of working structure out of which the rest could progress. The first meeting is crucial--talking to other instructors I realized that if not careful one could lose his class during the 1st meetings & would then have to spend time getting them back.

Spent rest of period giving a broad outline of syllabus--childhood--with my focus on the 'myth of the child'--various perspectives from which we'd examine this--and structure of course: "P" to entire class/ no attendance/ come only if you want/ few papers/ no tests/etc. (spent period chained to my seat behind desk --in terror of standing-up, class etc.).

Also, with consent changed Saturday morning class to Thursday afternoon at 4. (Tu 9 Th 9,4).

By middle of next period progressed to being able to move in rough semicircle behind desk. Added to syllabus some; found out Alice in Wonderland, the first text on syllabus was not in bookstore (they ordered the annotated Mother Goose instead) --opened the discussion--talked a bit more about literature and literature of childhood--class up-tight as whole about participating.

(Keep in mind here context of 1st semester freshman--all straight from the little grey boxes of home and school--almost 90% of men in technical sciences; chicks as well in math, etc.--in fact, only 1 of 25 expected to be literature major--picked up only one other humanity major through classics.)

Attempted explanation that what can be taught by simply telling it & giving it to you is not really worth knowing--that kind of teaching is either a lesson in discipline or entertainments. Definition of truth as felt (there are no truths but felt truths).

Modified syllabus: began with 3 poems: Traherne's Centuries & "The Preparative" (preparation for Felicitie), Archie Ammons' "Nellie Myers", & Roethke·s "The Old Florist"--all of which dealt with experience of child. Class response over the 2 weeks with these poems, particularly Ammons & Roethke was really quite marvellous at times. Included some authentic personal context of their own--starting to examine what it meant to be a child/adult. How you didn't have to have parent/ adult there to tell you what to do if those introjected voices were there grinding out noises inside your head--voices that sounded like squeezing sphincters.

Approached world of child through introduction of Freud, N.O. Brown, Watts, Reich, M. Bonaparte, Huizinga though rarely introd. as such.

Then Alice in Wonderland--here about 2 1/2 weeks--approach to reality other than common--(as in common-denominator) sense. Broke ground with scientific minded through Carrol's wonderland logic. change--growth--perception (phenomenology of the "trip"). Paper on internal-external change/reality. Responses by and large trite: attempt at being "right"--rehash of class. 2 or 3 exceptional papers (one from a local girl who I never guessed was up to it--she said she always wanted to write that way but was never allowed in high school). 2 papers that were, honest to God, on a dishonest 3rd grade level. (don't chemists & engineers have to read or write?) 2 problems from class: 1) inability to read on barest literal level (did some plot & new critical therapy) & 2) trailing off of interests.

Intermediary problems: physical setting: attempted face-to-face seating ( ) --worked well for rest of term (also discussed briefly architecture of community --suggested Goodman's essay on physical arrangement of personal confrontation in Utop. Essays....put this on reserve); tendency to talk to teacher even when speaking to someone else's pt.--part of problem of facelessness, lack of sense of community among students.--also conditioned reflex of raising hand before talking ("teacher"). A lot of resistance to breaking these modes--particularly since they are reinforced in the other classes--but we achieved quite a lot--particularly through insistence on learning each others names, looking at person you talk to --my impatience with raised hands, etc.

Here there was a democratic discarding of the syllabus. Lack of interest in going on with it. Attempt to discover general (i.e. common) interest. Resistance to making suggestion or choice. Finally, steered towards contemporary 'folk-rock' or what have you. Spent considerable time with Dylan's blonde on blonde (particularly the poem "Visions of Johanna") & Sgt. Pepper's (here: She's Leaving Home, "Within You & Without You"...). Surprisingly enough, for all but 4 or 5 of the class this was their 1st exposure. Followed songs on hand-out sheets (building up a ditto-master library of these sort of materials is rather important).

Also did a 4 page hand-out on the new poetics--leaning heavily on Creeley, Olson, myself--plus full page bibliography showing various ways of getting in: suggesting that you pick up where you want--the criterion is whether or not it works for you.

The psychedelic chapter worked well--if only it changed the notion of what is permissable in class--but it remained a problem in broaching an entirely new view of the world.

After this got mired--at the point that the class was bringing in less and less material both in terms of new records and ideas, I opened up the curriculum again.

In fact, I refused to make the decision of what to do next. Instead we had approximately 5 class sessions of quiet--the choice was to either sit without talking or discuss what you wanted to do. This was probably the most difficult time for the teacher--I did suggest exercises in yogi or contact awareness (vis Gestalt Therapy) some of which were carried out. The 1st period of silence was informative--the class simply could not sit there--tension mounted--about 1/3 of the class walked out after 15 minutes--another 1/3 when I turned my back to write on the board--the rest either filtered out or remained.

Finally, after about two weeks of this a few abortive attempts (e.g. "why don't we have a discussion about something" was 1 suggestion) the class decided on Manchild In The Promised Land. We resolved to spend the week and 1/2 before Thanksgiving vacation on Roethke & Ammons (here about 5 kids picked up & ran off poems & discussed them)--& pick up Manchild when we get back. We did & it worked for about two periods--basically there was nothing to say about the book.

We then picked-up on Howl & some Olson tapes for the rest of the term.

A Kind of Summary:

1) Perhaps the basic premise vis. literature was that the poem as figure would be meaningless if there was too much shit as ground interfering with it. In fact, this was a working hypothesis proven in class through a few Gestalt exercises in focused attention.
2) That any humane structure would have to manifest itself as we went along.
3) As a working principle for me: it would simply be impossible to reach an entire class so that to some extent success would be 4 or 5 students really reached--& further--that no easy parameters of success exist: there might be a marked change now or maybe 3 years from now the break through would happen.
4) Group therapy (which proved quite successful particularly during the less well-attended afternoon classes) sex education, etc. are unavoidable given the context of few other human institutions in the culture beside the freshman English course.
5) The class is a kind of theatre--e.g. during one particular afternoon class both I and the class were completely without spirit--I jumped out the window, made snowballs & precipitated a snow-ball fight. At first the kids sat numb--

& allowed themselves to get hit. (Well, you don't throw snowballs at a teacher.) But, then, there was some kind of breakthrough--& they joined. When it was over we had a good discussion--led by the class--of poetry.

6) Maximize levels of work--e.g. one student dropped out from much of what we were doing--a chemistry major- but then started writing poetry--in the course of the semester (he had never written before) we worked out a lot after class in terms of technique & content--& in my opinion he shows promise as a poet. He's now changing his major to English.

7) Fuck it--I feel like a reporter for a progressive education journal--

8) The best success I had was the girl who came to me after two weeks & said that I had come across; that she agrees that the task is to find out who she is & she was dropping out--even though she faced a lot of hassle from her parents She kissed me good-bye--cried--& split.

9) Teaching is frustrating as hell (always) & occassionally (very) rewarding:

10) For any program--even this one--to finally be successful we'll have to destroy both the University & America as we now know them. Maybe our program does its share towards this end.

(as Roethke said in the film I showed the class--

> a good poem is difficult--most people [who don't exist] are afraid of it--
> for it demands no less than this--that you change your life."

postscript: when you go off <u>it</u> the whole thing- it's all lost--until you go back & pick it up again.

* * *

MFC "Fast" John C. Rowe

Introduction - In the following account of the first semester of English Composition (102R), I have tried to include as much information as possible. In some cases, the material included might appear unnecessary and tedious. For this reason, I have divided this report into smaller, more palatable portions designed to be read separately or consecutively. It is difficult to know which experiences and ideas are common or unique among the various sections of freshman English.

Some unconventional teaching tactics were necessary to communicate to the diverse group which attends classes in Millard Fillmore. The average age of my students was thirty-three, the majority of them being between twenty-five and thirty. However, the range of ages extended from nineteen to fifty-two. Contrary to my expectations, it was the older students who showed the greatest ability to accept new views (often in opposition to their own). The younger students seemed far more "set in their ways" than I had anticipated.

The division of Evening College sections into "fast" and "slow" was very effective in my case. Most of my students had similar problems of composition, very few of them serious enough to require long discussions of grammar and sentence structure in class. The one unavoidable problem I see in this type of division is that some of the most poorly written first essays may have contained some of the best ideas. One student who I accepted in my section even though his prose composition was almost incomprehensible, very quickly cleared up his grammatical problems and by the end of the semester wrote excellent essays. In Mr. Fuller's case, it was obvious from his first essay that he could think creatively and in an orderly manner. In other cases, I suspect that the student's mental abilities might not be quite as apparent in the first essay. Perhaps the first class ought to be devoted to a discussion, in which every student takes part. This might give the teacher some small indication of the students' abilities to think rather than write. Of course, this is a rather weak alternative.

I did not teach with a group, although I did keep in touch with what instructors in both the day school and night school were doing. I found that it was impossible to plan farther ahead than a few weeks. The organization of the class depended solely on what the students' essays seemed to lack or need. It seems that a successful freshman English program must be taught as a workshop, in which individual and general problems are discussed as they arise. A professor of creative fiction once told me: "Just write. Write anything, but keep writing." This became the basic premise of my course. The students wrote constantly and although the work was overloaded sometimes, they seemed to work a number of their more ambiguous problems out in the very act of writing.

Class Procedure - 1) The rites of passage: The students generally disliked the idea of a pass/fail course. Night school students seem to be even more concerned with grades (or some material indication of success or failure) than day school freshmen. I decided to grade their essays A,B,C,D,F. I emphasized the fact that a "C-" average would be required to earn a "P" in the course. Although no student who regularly attended my section failed the course, the C- cutoff seemed to give them an objective goal. In view of their jobs and other daytime responsibilities, I allowed them to turn in late essays up to a month after the due date. As a result, my final grade sheet indicates that very few students failed to turn in all of the eleven outside assignments. Remembering my own undergraduate fear and trembling about papers and due dates, I felt that a very lenient attitude would cause them to regard the course with more enjoyment. Inevitably, students abused this system and would turn up in class with reams of manuscript every few weeks. However, this was the exception.

Attendance was not required. If a student who usually did not attend class complained about his grades, then I pointed out that he might be missing something. Otherwise, if the student's work improved and he did the assignments, I did not grade him down for any failure to attend class. Most students did not attend one to three classes.

MFC "Fast", John C. Rowe - continued

2) Structure and Organization: Essay topics followed no general pattern, but they always included enough choices that the student had some variety. Also, offering the student a choice resulted in a greater diversity of ideas for class discussion. I experimented with various types of topics in an attempt to discover what the students were interested in. Themes ranged from the trite and conservative topic: "What should the university's role in the community involve? Select a specific (Private or public) University and/or community; or discuss university-community relations in general", to more creative choices: "1) Keep a diary (not a 'record' of daily events) (Or) 2) Write a short story dramatizing a significant event in your childhood." Most essays were assigned as 500 words minimum. Some students felt that they should be allowed to write on whatever topic they wished. Although they may have been correct in asking for more liberality in the course, I wanted to test certain aspects of their thought and writing with particular assignments.

Students were assigned revisions of their work at intervals throughout the semester. Their revisions told me whether or not they were able to follow my corrections and criticisms. In general, they tended to take my corrections at face value. If they used an incorrect word or phrase such as: "... false purity is destructive of one's contact with others." then I would have to write "destroys" or some other correction above the incorrect phrase in order for them to understand their mistake. In many cases, I merely put a question mark above a work or phrase:

w. ?
... the symbolic disguise of an angel ....

This tended to stalemate some of the slower students. I wanted them to pick their own corrections and change them according to their own style, not according to my idea as to how it should sound. My students disliked the correction "w. ?" the most, because they felt that I was imposing my values on their essays. It was difficult to communicate the idea that certain words are awkward and unwieldy when used in the wrong context.

Very little class time was devoted to grammatical problems per se. In our discussions of student essays, both thought and structure (organization, grammar, etc.) were considered. In general, I tried to handle the more serious grammatical problems in individual interviews. Elements of Style was recommended and in four cases I required that the student read certain chapters.

After the second essay of the term, I gave a one hour lecture on certain basic grammatical principles (including some considerations of using an outline for longer term papers, etc.). The most frequent problems were: 1) Run-on sentences; 2) Use of passive voice unnecessarily; 3) Use of present participles and gerunds with prepositional phrases, rather than simple tense of the verb; 4) One line paragraphs; 5) Inappropriate use of word in context; 6) Redundance; 7) Circumlocution; 8) Long, unrelated lists in sentences with several dependent clauses; 9) Consistency and parallelism of verb tenses; 10) Subject - verb agreement (number); and 11) Confusion of subject and object (passive voice).

This analysis may sound a bit mechanical. In general, grammar was only important where it led to clarity and good sense. I did not stress rules, only what appeared appropriate for the student's style and the context of his work. Around the seventh week of classes, I handed out two sheets of general "do's and don'ts" in writing. These lists were adapted from some creative writing notes sent to me by Dr. Richard Macksey (John Hopkins University).

Although this was a "fast" class, poor grammatical structure was one of the prime causes for the failure of students' communication. The traditional rules of grammar did not help the students. Neither I nor they could remember all the delicacies of the language, but in our discussions we tried to create a style for the individual student which would appropriately communicate. Some of our discussions were concerned with the problem of creating a language that would effectively cross the limitations of social milieu and environment.

MFC "Fast", John C. Rowe - continued

Approximately every three to four classes, we discussed a student's essay (mimeographed and handed out). In some cases, our discussions bogged down -- students had nothing to say. It was necessary to prod them to say anything in the beginning . As some people said, they felt nervous criticizing someone else's writing, particularly when I tried to select a "good" manuscript.

General class discussions of essay topics and related subjects often evoked strong disagreement and the most lively debates of the semester. For example, a heated argument over the topic "A definition of the American Dream" seemed to give several of the more passive students confidence in expressing themselves in class.

A few writing assignments were given in class. For example, one assignment required that the student write on a picture (some Daumier prints, advertisements from magazines, etc. were passed around) and translate the visual into: 1) An art critique; 2) A short story incorporating the essentials of the picture; (or) 3) An essay on an idea suggested in one of the pictures (viz.: several students wrote on the disorder of time with respect to an advertisement picturing several Dalesque clocks photographed through the lens of a lime shark). These assignments weren't graded, and we took them lightly. This gave the students a chance to let go a little -- satirize, play verbal games. Most students said that they spent from four to six hours on each outside assignment (of 500 words). In many cases, it seemed that the essay was overwrought. Many of the in-class essays were better than the outside assignments. The class felt that we ought to have done more of these impromptu essays.

In an essay "How to Write" by W. Carlos Williams, I tried to emphasize the necessity of getting ideas (any ideas) on paper -- then organizing. Students often seemed afraid to put the pen to the paper without being conscious of exactly what they wanted to say. Once again, I stressed the idea of writing -- writing anything.

3) Readings: All reading assignments were informal and not required to pass the course. Two unannounced quizzes were given on the readings, but not graded for any credit. These quizzes merely told me where the students were in their readings.

The material which we covered grew out of a need for concrete illustrations of how to write clearly, and simply express complex arguments. In the beginning, one of the biggest problems was the use of complex and run-on sentences. We read Hemingway's "A Clean, Well-lighted Place" in a search for a basic sentence structure. I assigned an essay on: 1) A critique of the story; 2) Short story as an extension of one of the peripheral characters, etc.; (or) 3) An analysis of the style and the language of the story. I asked them to try to use Hemingway's style and language in their essays.

We spent about five intermittent weeks on Dubliners. We discussed all the stories in class and looked for a central unity in the work (patterns, themes, image links, etc.). Although Dubliners is extremely complex, the language and style are "scrupulously mean" (to paraphrase Joyce). Thus, I tried to emphasize the use of language in itself as a means of creating a complex skein of imagery, symbolism, and character. We stressed organization and figures of speech and the interweaving of ideas to keep the reader constantly aware of the central theses.

The general pattern for the discussions of Dubliners was an hour lecture on backgrounds and structure of a given story, followed by a class devoted to an open debate on the issues. Without some basis on which to agree or disagree, the students had very little to say. Suggestions for further readings were followed up to a surprising degree. Many students brought me articles and reviews on Joyce. They seemed to show general enthusiasm for Dubliners, although some of them objected that the work was "depressing".

There were the anticipated objections to the bugaboo of "Symbolism" ("Why doesn't this guy just say what he means?"). However, by the end of our readings of Dubliners, many students seemed to understand the purpose and some of the basic tools of literary criticism. On the other hand, there was a tendency to accept

MFC "Fast", John C. Rowe - continued
what was said in class on face value. If it was mentioned that "green" represented adventure and romance of faraway (eastern) lands for the boy in "Araby"; then some students naturally assumed:

green = adventure, romance

in everything. Most students had some difficulty understanding that symbolism, imagery, character, plot, etc. are not separate categories, but the constituent parts of the work. Too many students wrote in papers "On the symbolic level...."

The essays the students wrote while we were reading Joyce were not necessarily related to Dubliners. In one case, I asked them to write a newspaper editorial in favor of the publication of Dubliners in Dublin, which at the same time would not arouse the ire of Irish-Catholic readers. This was designed to test their abilities to escape a two-horned dilemma, or play the middle-of-the-road.

We had more fun with Babylon Revisited and Other Stories by F. Scott Fitzgerald. I tried to emphasize Fitzgerald's almost innate ability to tell a story--to keep all the threads together. I think that the students' ages contributed to their appreciation of Fitzgerald. Several students remembered when Scott and Zelda were the "beautiful young couple" of society. They seemed more able to accept Fitzgerald's America than Joyce's Dublin. In some cases, their natural chauvinism kept them from admitting that Fitzgerald attacked a society where: "When a lot of people get together in the best places, things go glimmering."

4) Term papers: An eight to ten page paper was required at the end of the semester (after Christmas vacation). This paper accounted for less than ¼ of their grades. In no case did it change anyone's P/F grade. I felt that whatever their immediate future goals in the University were that term papers and final exams would determine a good part of their success or failure. I wanted to see if they could hold together a long argument or thesis. The assignment was open. My suggestions included: 1) A critique of one theme, image, symbol, character, etc. in Dubliners as a source of unity and movement in the whole work; 2) An explication of one story in Dubliners or Babylon Revisited; and 3) A topic of their own choosing which would necessitate some creative thought and/or research, as approved by me in conference. Preliminary outlines were requested, but only about eight came in. In addition to papers on Fitzgerald and Joyce, several short stories and a story on professional football and UFOs were turned in. Actually, I found that some of the best papers were those written on topics selected by the students themselves. These papers showed the greatest improvement.

Teaching Methods - 1) Correcting student essays: I tried to avoid marking the papers too much, although in some cases my corrections were excessive. In general, I restricted most of my comments to a long critizue at the end of each essay. Students felt that the final critiques were the most helpful, but they were time-consuming. The volume of papers made it a never-ending job. No paper was returned without some good comments, and no paper was ever graded "F". If the student felt that the teacher was concerned with him as an individual, then he felt an obligation to do better work. If a student was upset by a grade on an essay, then I would let him rewrite the paper to change his grade. Despite the P/F system, students were very concerned with the grades they received on the individual essays.

2) Student attitudes: In the Evening College, there were some feelings of inferiority in comparison with the day school. Several students asked me if I thought the evening English courses were as rigorous as the day courses. The controversy over the suspension of an Evening College degree program in English, concentrated even more attention on the comparison of English courses in both divisions of the University. I found that a number of my students wrote essays that were maturer (if not more polished) and more articulate than many of the "good" essays written by the undergraduates. Nonetheless, there was some natural prejudice connected with "Night School", particularly among the younger students.

MFC "Fast", John C. Rowe - continued
3) Student interviews. Conferences were difficult to arrange because of the students' day-time responsibilities. We had one full set of interviews that stretched over a three-week period. Most students were available only before or after classes. I tried to make it clear that I was available at any time to discuss any of their problems.

In my relations with the students I tried to avoid any personal political, social, or philosophical views. Of course, I was never totally objective, and my prejudices came to the surface most in our discussion of the readings. However, the variety of the students' opinions made it necessary that I avoid any expression of my dogma. This annoyed some students to the point that they would ask me "What do you think anyway?", but I tried to parry those shots. As a result, most of the class arguments took place between students.

No one who asked a question in class was ever "wrong". We discussed rather than argued. I employed these and other equivocating tactics in order to get the students to say something. In the beginning of the semester everyone was so afraid to speak that I could only hear my own echo. Perhaps the age of my students made them afraid to venture an opinion that might be "wrong" in the face of so many others. On the other hand, they may have been suspicious of a "youngster" like me. I tried calling on people at random, and after a few weeks of that they volunteered ideas more freely.

Probably the greatest handicap to teaching in Millard Fillmore is the fact that the students do not know one another. They do not feel the same sense of community that very quickly develops in the freshman dormitories.

Students' Reactions to Pass-Fail System: The general reaction of my students to the pass-fail system was predictably negative. The Evening College student seems to be even more concerned with "grades" than the Day School. In one sense this is understandable, for they have learned that their transcripts of grades are used by employers. On the other hand, the evening students (and in this case, the older students) seem to be extremely conscious of their positions in a complex skein of abstract hierarchies.

Some first-hand comments follow:

1) How will this method of grading affect those who are trying to make the dean's list. If a student who is taking six hours, three hours of which is English, is it possible to qualify for the dean's list?

2) It may be because we are in the habit of graded courses, but if this leads to a general policy in the University, it will probably only cause confusion. One of the best ways a student has to know whether or not he (she) is "getting" the material is by the grade received.

3) I think the new system ... is the better. In a course where expression, writing, and interpretation, are graded it is difficult to determine a grade for all areas concerned. The student is released from the usual routine of pleasing the teacher for a grade; and the teacher can cover material that is more difficult than normal, but more interesting.

4) This new grading system takes the pressure off and gives us the chance to express our feelings in writing, not with the thought to improve our grade, but with the thought of improving our writing ability.

As the above selections indicate, my students seem to have expressed the general reasons for or against the system.

MFC "Fast" — Thomas R. Buri

The course operated at three levels, at times intersecting, often not.

1.) papers & comments
2.) reading text: NEW AMERICAN STORY
3.) class discussions

MFC "Fast", Thomas R. Burt - continued
1.) With two exceptions, topics were not assigned for papers. Initial reaction to this was a wave of anecdotes & short stories with moral punchlines. The reservoir quickly dried, and a number of students complained of having nothing to write about. At which point I spent a couple of classes on the notion of "juxtaposition" -- including music, film, & reading -- which succeeded in giving them a tool which could be used in their individual contexts (intersect Burroughs & Cut-Ups). The most important result was the sense (at least) that they had done something "new" even radical (some freely borrowed from newspaper articles, others rewrote historical events according to their own tastes, etc.) -- and a more subtle result, a sympathy with the text.

By this time I was familiar with each individual's writing & used the comments on papers to suggest further directions. For the most part, this was an attempt to encourage respect for familiar subject matter. (There was a strong notion that one needed to write about something extraordinary) also, the continual insistence upon the use of concrete detail.

One notable failure was the suggestion that they write a "criticism" of one of the stories from the reading. It is possible that I did not handle this exercise with proper respect. At any rate the attempts were unimpressive.
2.) There was no concentrated effort to understand and/or appreciate any of the authors in the text. However it was extremely useful as a common reference point in class discussions, as something to respond to. e.g. when reading LeRoi Jones relevance of jazz was mentioned & the following class was spent listening to music /and when reading Eastlake (concurrent with LIFE magazine article of American Indian) several classes were spent on "primitivism", hippies, etc.
3.) First few weeks, class time was mainly focused upon various language problems; media influence, symbols, etc. etc. However most of this talk became too abstract to be of any use in personal writing problems (although some of this material was useful in later discussions).

The only other major focus of class discussion was on primitive "thought" and myth. This was particularly useful in underlining the respect for concrete detail which I tried to encourage in their papers. I found that many aspects of "primitive mentality" furnished the necessary means of preception through which a number of writing problems could be handled...
Specific Techniques - Film: On several occasions I showed films which I had made, & have made them available privately to 2 other freshmen English courses. They are "experimental" (multiple exposure, collage of images). These were quite successful in stimulating a discussion about modern film & its possible use (media, & c.) -- I can make these available to others who might be interested in showing them.
Reading papers: Papers were not mimeographed; instead several were read aloud at almost every class. At the beginning I usually read them, but, as the class became more familiar & informal, students read their own papers. This opportunity for a "presentation" was helpful to some, though it depended upon the personality. An effort at student criticism was a failure. I found it more successful to discuss papers in terms of subject -- then in terms of their literary merits.
Writing Quantity: The "5 page a week" recommendation was mentioned, but few students kept this pace. The problem was largely one of finding subjects (since they were usually unassigned) & I encouraged longer papers done over longer intervals. Students often submitted work in progress & this was helpful. Also I encouraged revisions -- generally toward a loosening of syntax.

Several students got involved in term projects and/or arranging their work in series or unified whole. Overall structures of this sort were a great help in finding subject matters.

MFC "Fast" Mark Malkas

THE SWING OF THINGS: All sorts of writing assignments: descriptions, stories, reminiscences, straight essays, reports--. (The stories were generally poor moves, they're not ready for that yet.) I usually left students free to choose their own topics; though when I wanted to skew their development, I'd give specific 'themes'. Also, as soon as a student's papers shaped up, I'd give him the option of ignoring my assignments (their topics and frequency) and of working at his own rate.

I tried, simply, to do everything at once (healing allwounds, Working With Both Form and Content). Scatter effect; seems to have worked quite well.

1. On correcting 'bad habits', crazy grammar, herds of cliches, & so on; haven't been able to find a really effective method for doing this. Whenever I found a universal problem, I'd lecture on it; but the difficulties proved to be too vast. I held office hours for a few weeks, but not many people showed up.....

2. Practice in Thinking and Being Persuasive....As material for thought & argument, I used all sorts of literature--essays, newspapers. (I threw in enough contemp. poetry to make them feel a bit mod; but, with the exception of Ginsburg, it all seemed too tough for them.) I finally got good, regular in-class fights going. So the classmembers were forced to be conscious of various (and new) points of view, and to question their own assumptions. I sometimes even took the old track of making them argue for the 'opposite side'. Slowly, the arguments of the papers became more airtight.

3. Tried to make them BE INTERESTING, to get their imaginations going. I used two attacks. The first was to jar them loose by not giving them what they expected. (Absence of grades played into my hands in this regard--and I find I have nothing else to say about the system.) First they started bringing incense and candles--but then most of them started really moving a little more freely (in word as well as deed).

I also tried to put them in binds. When things are easy, The Kids tended to say obvious, dull things; under pressure, they got better. For instance, I'd suddenly stop lecturing and make one of them run the class.

The best trick was this one. I located a very nondescript kid and had him 'pose' for an in-class essay. They didn't catch on that he was a perfect mirror, off of which they were to bounce themselves. The essays were dull lists of his physical trappings. Next class, I got him back again. They didn't know what to do--they had to search themselves for things to say. By the third try they knew I was crazy, but they had also run out of boring things to say AND WERE ALL OF THEM INTERESTING. And they stayed that way; they'd gotten the feel of a good, colorful sentence.

4. Tried to get them to order their thoughts and to employ TACTICS in writing. Pointed out as many different possible manners of construction, ways of being forceful, of having Motion and development (toward conclusions, generalizations, etc.). The hardest thing of all was to get them to outline papers before typing them off. I finally got about half of them to do it.

I'd lecture & then have the students pool their notes & then we'd construct an essay based on them, as a class. Also had them read expository prose & take it apart. Got the best results from having them read each other's work and comment--they got well into that.

Everybody improved.

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MFC "Fast" Edgar Billowitz

A fairly clear and comprehensive picture of my English 101 course is presented in the following student papers. These are from the six students who are with me again second semester, and represents their first assignment. The first is from my best student, a young man about 26, and the second from my second-best student, a housewife about 42 years old. The remaining four produced somewhat uneven work, sometimes quite good, other times floundering. The manner

in which the course adapted itself to different needs and levels of development is evident in the variation in response.

STUDENT PAPERS

During the first semester of this course my most significant improvement was in composition. Our class approached the goal of improving our writing from three related standpoints.

We learned to establish a central theme in a paper and to keep to it. We also learned to focus our whole attention on this theme. As a result I believe that my writing has become more economical and less cluttered with irrelevant material.

The basis of the Instructor's program was that the students should learn to use the 'Organic Voice' in their writing, as opposed to the 'Mechanical Voice'. In essence this means that what is written is what is truly thought, rather than an amalgam of cliches and ideas which have been unconsciously absorbed from the external mass of verbalization which surrounds us.

To learn to recognize the organic voice the members of the class criticized one another's writing and concentrated upon a novel - Siddhartha, by Hermann Hesse and the poem The Lost Son, by Theodore Roethke. These two works have a common factor. Both portray a search for the inner source of knowledge and unity which give human words and actions a basic honesty of purpose. This is what we had been practicing in our writing.

In connection with the above, we became acquainted with the Gestalt method of psychology in order to be able to organize the data presented to us by our senses and act upon this information in the way most beneficial to ourselves. Skill in forming a 'good Gestalt' or 'figure-ground' relationship is helpful in all facets of life. In writing or speaking it aids in finding the organic voice.

In addition to composition and reading Siddhartha and The Lost Son, we viewed slides and listened to music tapes. In all of these presentation it was possible to distinguish recurring themes and to fix musical or visual figures against shifting backgrounds. This is a fundamental part of the process of forming a good Gestalt.

During the second semester I would like to see all of these techniques used again. I do not think that my writing is nearly as good as it should be.

I would like to attempt some creative writing (such as a short story) during this semester, and if such an assignment is given, I think that at least a month should be allowed for this, concurrent with regular assignments.

I also think that there should be more poetry read. Since all good poetry illustrates the use of the organic voice, I feel that this would be a valuable approach. I believe too, that skill in understanding and appreciating poetry is a necessity for a student at the college level. It takes practice to develop this skill, and lack of practice is one of the chief deterrents to poetry reading. Perhaps the students could be asked to select examples of poetry with which they have had difficulty, or which would exemplify the organic voice. Poetry is a method of writing which is fresh and intense - this is very nearly a definition of the organic voice.

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When I signed up for freshman English, I had certain preconceived ideas about the material I would be expected to mentally digest and then spew back for exams and a term paper. Some of these ideas were built upon the type of English program presented in my high school days. Mostly the ideas came from my husband, who had successfully passed through freshman English some ten years prior.

I was delighted to find that the way English was taught ten years ago is not necessarily the case today. Having been out of high school

for twenty years, I found great encouragement in the promised lack of exams or a term paper. To me, this was an ideal way to ease back into the academic world. What a relief not to be faced immediately with that sort of onerous pressure.

I was pleased to hear the class told by our instructor that we were to write about a given subject matter according to the way we really felt about it. In fact, our teacher strongly discouraged us from writing about any subject in a way that we, the students, thought would be more agreeable with his way of thinking. I must say that I accepted these particular instructions with "a grain of salt." As the term progressed it became apparent that the instructor really meant what he had said at the beginning of the course. This was good because it gave me, and it must have given my fellow students, a new sense of freedom in expressing ourselves.

Looking back over the term's work, I realize that I am still hampered by my inability to pick out the general theme of a story of subject matter. I can't say that I came away from the term with a better appreciation of poetry. However, I can fairly say that I have a better understanding of some types of poetry. That is, I have a more comprehensive understanding of some of the thought processes involved. Concerning the technical construction of poems, or even prose, I am still very much in the dark. Yet I am not concerned about this because I believe that it is possible to enjoy the movement or meaning of a poem without understanding the mechanics involved.

I found the musical sessions interesting - sometimes abrasively so. The art slide was very stimulating to me. This particular work seemed to speak to me. I suspect that the picture had little to say to a few of my fellow students, but then there are other paintings which would reach them and not me.

Perhaps this was the greatest limitation of this style of teaching. It is difficult to make a decent evaluation of one novel, one poem or one picture. It is good when a job is undertaken to do it thoroughly and well. This is very much a part of my own ingrained, personal philosophy. Still it seems to me that we who are involved in beginning English courses need a wider base for comparison's sake as well as for the differing needs and tastes of the personalities involved.

I personally found the course stimulating, although there were a few parts I didn't appreciate. In particular I remember the "slide show." Maybe this projection didn't reach me because I found it too true to life. We daily get snatches into or glimpses of other people's lives. These views are rather frequently distorted by our own viewpoints on life. I don't need more distortions. I am looking for more positive relationships in life.

In looking back over the entire course, in my present state of mind, I find that the pluses far outstrip the minuses. I personally look forward to using the past term's work as a basis for the one now upon us. I also look forward to the continued stimulation of my senses and thought processes.

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In the past, English was to me, a dry subject, consisting of grammar, composition structuralization and readings which lacked personal value and insight. The English 101 class instructed by E. Billowitz was quite the opposite. I learned concepts which enabled me to express myself more clearly both on paper and in every day conversation. These concepts gave me the guides to being more alert, awake and aware.

One of the first things I learned was that two voices existed within me, the organic and the mechanical. The organic voice is the sincere one, expressing that which is actually felt; it is prompted by the human need for expression and communication. The mechanical voice is the more powerful

voice, which reacts and responds as the individual feels he ought to, rather than displaying his actual feelings.

Aided by the Gestalt Therapy, I learned to relax and have all my senses awake. My view of daily life was a new one, a more total, clear and objective view. I could see life in its tiniest forms, not only in its larger creatures. I began to look at situations, think them out and evaluate them for myself. Only after looking at them objectively would I draw my conclusions or make any decisions.

I also became aware of my bodily chemistry. I found myself co-ordinating my breathing with my pulse every night which helped relax me for sleep. When I did the co-ordinating during the day, I found my tensions gone and I was more alert and aware of what was going on around me.

One of the most meaningful novels I've read was introduced by Mr. Billowitz; it is called Siddhartha by Herman Hesse. This book brought me great consolation as it would any individual searching for meaning in life. I lived the experiences of Siddhartha; I felt his happiness, sadness, his every thought and physical sensation. I gained more from this book than any I had previously read.

Most important to me however, was my new outlook on emotion. Prior to this course, I had been warned to guard my emotions, watch them, never let them run away. Now I can truly see emotions as a guide to living, feeling, understanding, and responding.

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In order for most writers' pieces to interest the reader, the writer, himself, must be aroused by the subject. This does not neccssarily mean he approves of it or even disapproves. The most important thing is the fact that the subject has set him (the writer) to think inwardly and deeply.

My past English classes taught me this technique. I admit I did not realize this until they concluded. In class we were stirred by the everyday happenings, (those not necessarily happening to us), around us. We didn't have to accept them, only to react to them.

Listening to a record of a popular recording group or singer is pleasant, yes, but hardly deep enough to spur us on to writing something well, merely because we're interested in it.

A portrait of a child is indeed lovely, but, again, does not exactly make us search for meaning or unity. We need something much deeper and more complicated.

We need the element of surprise.

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For about one and one-half months, different passages were read to us on the river theme--how a river was looked upon first as a challenge for building a bridge across, and then forgotten as the bridge was finished;

----how the sea partakes in the precipitation cycle;

----when a man described how he was analogous to a river in his youth (powerful, bashed against rocks);

I found this interesting that the river theme was used so often and in different aspects. It seemed well worth the time spent on it.

We also covered a good part of the Gestalt book. This I found advantageous in carrying out the rest of my English projects. I learned to concentrate more and to look at objects in a different light.

We also had a few tapes on various themes in class. The first paralleled one of the major themes in class--reality. This tape, by Laura Huxley, was excellent; but the tape on which Alan Watts spoke didn't seem to make a great impression.

The poetry we studied also seemed to make little indention. After various poems were explained, they began to make sense; but before that time they were pretty hard to figure out.

In December we listened to a band play in the Norton Lounge. This was sensational. The definite beat and power of their music came through clearly. You could also exercise your concentration by listening to various parts of the band. I would enjoy hearing future concerts like this.

At our last class we saw some slides of Indians with their music as backround. I feel as if I got little out of this session. The reason for the constant flashing of the pictures was probably to get the "beat" of the whole situation. But it didn't seem to work for me in this way. I tried to get something out of it, but throughout the whole time little broke through.

I have never had an English course taught in this way. I'm glad to know that style and correct grammar aren't the only things that the subject "English" calls for.

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When I was introduced to this course of English, I was astonished by the technical experiments. The experiments on the growth of the human nature were quite different from anything I have ever conceived. At first I was not sure this field of English or new area was going to help me accomplish any set value in English writing. As I continued through I ... realized how to differentiate mechanical and organic voices. At times I found this area very difficult.

What I enjoyed about each class, was that they were all different and flexible. They penetrated new areas each time and helped to integrate the previous classes. Also the brief discussions on other peoples work was very enlightening because it enabled me to see my own mistakes and how to avoid new ones.

The "Gestalt Therapy" brough a new and more interesting aspect to English. I must admit some of the experiments were failures while others were quite interesting and enjoyable. Most of the experiments in class were both physically and mentally invigorating. All the experiments linked together sorts of unknown and sometimes forgotten areas of my self. The book helped to bring about a fulfillment or complete involvement. I think it is a wonderful insight to education and the psychological understanding of myself.

My suggestion for future classes is that we should read more papers and continue to discuss them briefly. I also would enjoy more of the experiments that you held for our benefit. I especially like the slide show you made possible in Foster Hall. It was related in some ways to the movie I saw recently, entitled "Chappaqua", produced by Harwick. This movie was related in some ways to the fast and sharp movements of scenes such as in your slide show.

The assignments to be handed in weekly were quite managable and lenient. I also feel that your comments on assigned work were helpful for improvement.

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<u>History of the course</u>; It took a little while before many of the students could respond in a genuine way to the experiments--at first many seemed to be looking for "what I wanted;" most, however, learned fairly rapidly to respond honestly and spontaneously to the problems. Whenever a student did catch on--ie., achieved palpable success in one experiment or responded well to one assignment--then he invariably seemed much more interested, seemed to take pleasure in a kind of new found skill (Gestalt formation), and often, though not always, his work improved and his degree of success on experimennts

became greater. Some worked on a much higher level than others, but virtually everyone had success with the experiments on at least one occasion.

At another level, the "success or failure" is not really meaningful: for the way I constructed the course--or, according to the basic philosophy--everything is successful. That is, everything we did was to be considered as a field for learning, so that whatever the "results," one could, with the proper framework, learn from it.

Thus, e.g., if I play music, or show a slide, and a student does not like the music or the art, then he analyzes his dislike; for what one dislikes is certainly as important as what he likes. The point is that he gets to know himself better (one of the major aims of the course), and sometimes, through understanding, learns to appreciate something which he formerly disliked.

Or again, if I presented a certain problem or work of art, and a student responds by saying that "nothing happened"--then this, too, is interesting; for the student must determine to what degree this absence of reaction is due to himself and what degree to the condition of the work of art. If others reacted in one way or another, then he can ask himself what perceptual areas are turned off in himself, or what inner areas has he lost contact with? What, in other words, prevented him from making contact? The Gestalt book helps direct one toward finding the deficiency as well as suggesting an approach toward its remedy.

Or, if no one seems to respond in a particularly meaningful way, then I learn that, for one reason or another, this method or exercise is not appropriate for this particular class at this time. These I do not consider failures, in the larger sense, either, for they help me to find out the most appropriate means for contacting the class.

"Failures," in the lower sense, then, are just as interesting as "successes," if not more so, if one can learn from them, and if they direct one toward some type of remedial activity.

I would also attribute the general success of the course in no small degree to the fact that I was given complete freedom in teaching the course, regarding both subject and method. This was extremely important to me, and I am certainly grateful for having this opportunity.

I might also mention that the course was particularly interesting to me, personally, in that it necessitated a re-evaluation of my own philosophies and ideational systems, especially in trying to re-establish the basic assumptions or foundations.

A major turning point occurred after about five or six weeks, when, in discussing Siddhartha, a student asked if symbols were arbitrary or had inherent value. I turned this question to the class, and found that they could hold a fairly high level discussion of this subject amongst themselves. Hereafter, I found greater skill in letting the students discuss things amongst themselves, with little intervention from myself.

As far as the actual writing of the students, I was quite pleased. Those who wrote fairly well from the beginning showed significant improvement, and continued to write quite consistently at a high level throughout. There were also three students who wrote very poorly at the beginning--who could barely write a coherent sentence; they improved a great deal very rapidly, though, and by about the third- or half-way mark were producing reasonably good writing. This I attribute laregly to the Gestalt method, which not only tells one what to do, but also how to do it. These three students were all characterized by the fact that they showed a simple willingness to learn, and by the fact that all seemed to take the experiments seriously and perform them honestly.

There were also a few students who wrote adequately at the beginning (but not well), and who did not take the work seriously nor even complete all of the assignments. They improved very little, and always did the minimum of work.

The main deflection from my original intention is that I relied less on the experiments in the Gestalt Therapy book, and devised my own experiments instead, which better suited both my purposes as well as classroom situations. In general though, I found my original intentions to be both workable and productive.

I feel very strongly that the pass/fail system was extremely successful, and certainly should be continued (in my course, or my type of course, at any rate). It gave the students a real sense of freedom, and fostered an attitude of free experimentation, which, obviously, was essential to my course. Moreover, since "trial-and-error learning," or learning from "failures" (as described above), was a primary approach in my course, I feel that this type of learning would have been greatly hampered by the conventional grading system.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

MFC "Fast" Michel Small

Last semester I attempted to commit the students to their writing, and whatever methods I used were directed to this end. I felt that as long as the students felt they were merely turning in assignments, any improvement in their writing would be ephemeral.

Probably the most successful aspect of the course was the private meetings I held for about an hour with each of the students, beginning after the fourth or fifth week of classes. Although I often discussed writing and occasionally read and criticized (and praised) the better papers in class, I felt that the private conferences helped the students more than anything I could say in class, which would be necessarily general, and which I often had to clarify in private conference.

Except when I discussed writing, the discussions in class were open. We used one text, The Borzoi College Reader, rather sparingly. The first two or three weeks we discussed subjects such as the Vietnam war and racial issues until I began to know the class. After that we touched on such issues as obscenity and censorship, which seemed to reveal their prejudices much more directly. I would always ask them at the beginning of a class if they wanted to discuss anything in particular. They often did not react to this, but occasionally they would mention something themselves. One of the high points of the class occurred when a nurse mentioned some incident where a doctor let a patient die, since the doctor felt the patient would die anyway. This led to a couple of discussions in which the students became quite involved. The point of all these discussions was not so much to solve a problem as to expose the students to different perspectives, and to develop a critical spirit and tolerance. Hopefully this would carry over to their writing (which it sometimes did not).

I generally assigned open topics, hoping that the students would feel more committed to whatever they were writing about, and consequently more open to suggestions for improving their writing. I succeeded only partially in this. In practice some of the students approached the course as a necessary evil, did the work, and cared little as long as they thought they could pass the course. However, many of the students did become involved in their writing and these generally showed improvement by the end of the semester.

Since class discussions were so open there were times when the discussion was nearly valueless. However, we occasionally did hit upon something which involved most of the class (almost accidentally at times), and then their enthusiasm would show itself on their papers.

The same problem occurred on their papers. By giving them complete freedom I did receive some very imaginative papers, but I also received quite a number of trite ones. They would sometimes simply record a personal experience without attaching any significance, emotional or otherwise, to that experience. Still, most of the class did eventually turn in at least one or two good papers.

Finally, I don't think that the pass-fail system particularly affected the student's performance. The good students tried anyway, and perhaps felt free, but the worse students just turned in assignments. However, I think that especially the good students responded well to the freedom I gave them in their papers and in class.

* * *

MFC "Fast" Phyllis Ann Sloss

General Objectives: To guide the student in presenting his ideas in a clear and organized way.

To show that the effective writer is one who wants to make the significance of his words clear to the average writer.

Specific Objectives. The specific objectives of the course are multiple. They are:

To emphasize to the student the necessity of striving for clarity, agreement between the writer and reader as to what the writer is referring.

To lead the student to choose the most simple and exact word to convey his ideas.

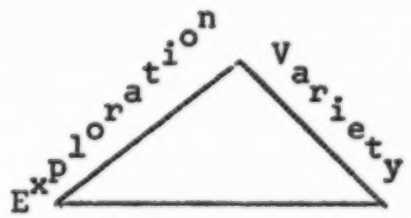
To cause the student to avoid flowery, meandering language.

To emphasize the usefulness of parallel structure in the attempt to attain clarity of thought.

To emphasize that clarity in writing is aided when ideas are related in their logical sequence.

The delight of teaching the course called Explorations in Writing is the challenge indicated by the basic word, explore. Both teacher and student are challenged to seek a variety of subject matter, methods, and ideas.

Yet exploration and variety are incomplete tools for building an interesting class and original subject matter. One more word is needed to complete the triad: imagination. Without imagination, the base, we could not hope to gain variety, the fruit of our exploration of such subject matter as people, art, essays, football games, newspapers and magazines.



What has been happening in English 102B3? Let the students tell you in their impromptu fashion:

> Explorations in writing is the subtitle of my Freshman English class and it is in a sense, the true name for this specific course. Throughout the few weeks that classes have been in session my English class has been a definite exploration.
>
> Unlike the usual procedures of an English class, in my class I have been exposed to different styles of writing....
>
> I have also become aware that it does not mean so much to use a big word as to use sentence variety.
>
> Although I have not conquered all of my shortcomings in writing, there is one obstacle I feel I may cross and that is clarity. I fail to realize that what might be clear for me to understand is often difficult for a reader.

At this point it may be indicated that vagueness is the disease of writing that was most difficult to cure when found in student writing. For that reason students were reminded intermittently about the necessity of establishing a direct relationship between references, like this and it, and their antecedents. Subsequently it was noticeable that students became increasingly aware of avoiding vagueness between references. Their awareness of such a fault, however, was not always equal to the force of habit. But when I decided to use more drills, using student errors as material, the more apt students learned. The slower students, except one, inserted changes in finished papers that indicated new understanding.

Variety is another concept that has been spotlighted in English 102B3. It has been suggested to students that they vary their sentence structure by beginning sentences with exclamations, questions, and quotations, for example. Here are more excerpts:

> What possible protection does the recently adopted Penal Code offer the average citizen?
>
> What self-protection does it permit our policemen?

The student in this instance used questions to establish rapport with the reader and to indicate the direction that succeeding middle paragraphs would take. Her use of questions permitted her to do what she had previously been least able to do. For the first time she was able to focus her ideas in precise order around the subject of the relationship of the Penal Code to policemen and the average citizen:

A recent example of the Penal Code at work is the killing of police officer William Gleisle. One of the newspaper articles concerning this terrible incident stated that nothing prevented officer Gleisle from pulling his revolver. What the article failed to mention, however, was that the Penal Code prevented him from using it until he first established from the criminal his intent to use a gun or another weapon...

In the next selection the student has chosen to begin her paper with an exclamation:

My Gripe

Leave the teenagers alone! I get so tired of hearing people say, "What is this world coming to? The teenagers of today are terrible."

Now let us consider the role of imagination in English 102B3. It has been my wish to encourage the student to use his imagination, and his ideas, instead of the teacher's, in order to explore hidden possibilities for subject matter. But alas! I was answered by tombstone faces offering no response. Considering that fear of ridicule might be the source of obstruction to student response, I presented students with the following thesis to defend or oppose:

All original thought deserves respect.

Said one student,

Original thinking is a mark of the individual. Each person has a mode of expression which distinguished him as someone apart from the crowd. Without this diversity of thought, the human race would be of a common mold. (Introductory Paragraph)

It is therefore our responsibility as humans to be receptive to new methods and thoughts. In this way, not only are we expressing an open-mindedness, but we are allowing for the improvement of humanity. Original thought should not be confined, it should merit acclaim and respect. (Concluding Paragraph)

Then another student replied,

All original thought deserves respect because no matter how illogical or incredible an untried theory may seem, it may be the seed of a new invention, a new cure or even a new way of life. (Middle Paragraph)

Remember that had no one respected the original thoughts of others, our world today would be familiar to the prehistoric cavemen, were they to reappear on earth in 1967. (Concluding Paragraph)

But there were other students who emphasized that original thinking (the atomic bomb) can be dangerous. Therefore, I was satisfied that this assignment encouraged the student to write with independence of thought.

Now I shall focus more specifically upon the teaching methods employed in English 102B3. Pragmatism, to which I partly subscribe, can be dangerous if practiced indiscriminately. However, I had explored the feasibility of two methods of teaching:

A. The use of student papers as text for class discussion;
B. The use of a textbook, Form and Idea, plus student papers, as a springboard for class discussion.

As a result of the above trial and error procedure, I learned that to accommodate a variety of student needs, arising from the heterogeneous nature of the class, it was necessary to divide the class time between methods "A" and "B." The slower students benefited more from method "A," while the faster students benefited more from method "B." Why? The reason for this development is that in the first situation analysis of the relationship between content and structure was done by the teacher and student, but in the second situation synthesis of form and idea was performed by students.

The merit of method "A" was that it dramatized to a student his individual strength or weakness. It also allowed the class as a whole to learn from the mistakes of individuals. Although anonymity was maintained, several students resented the exposure of their efforts to general scrutiny. One man said, "At first I became angry when you discussed my paper before the class." Why? I asked. "Because you were pointing out my mistakes." Subsequently, I reduced the frequency of my use of method "A." But I now think that to have done so was a mistake. Henceforth, peeves will be disregarded if a procedure creates response. Nothing succeeds like success.

The Introduction of the textbook, Form and Idea, tended to reinforce a sense of structure and traditionalism in many students. For many students, therefore, the textbook constituted a turning point in the class.

> As soon as Form and Idea came into my life my standard of writing hopefully became higher! The reason for this is the fact that I became familiar with many various authors and their style, and our numerous assignments relating to these essays have helped me greatly. The one that I feel I benefited from the most is the recent "A Modest Proposal," by Swift. I felt a great sense of achievement after I attempted to turn from my style of writing to his ironical technique. It is this sense of achievement thatkeeps me going. Before, I turn in a paper, I usually know if it will be considered bad or good by you.....

Let it be understood that at no time has the student been asked to imitate the style of the various essayists considered. Instead, the student has been led to consider the procedures: illustrations, examples, incidents, evidence, dialogue, and exposition, used by writers like Bacon, Huxley, and Swift to develop an idea. To illustrate the methods used by master essayists to develop the reader's understanding was my main purpose for using the textbook, Form and Idea.

We have considered several of the methods and directions used in English 102B3. While I have emphasized to the student the need for imagination and variety, I have needed these tools myself in order to adjust to the different needs of the students. For that reason I have valued the student's opinion about class activities.

Were student opinions slanted by fear of reprisal? Perhaps I was over zealous in reassuring students to the contrary. Said one individual:

> Your standards for our paper are very reasonable and it is our own fault if we don't live up to them. I'm not trying to be a "brown" by saying all of this because I'd like you to know that if I disagreed with your way of teaching I would let you know.

Another person replied:

> I feel I am an above average student, and base my opinion on past and present performances in the classroom and at home.
>
> During this semester's English course we have accomplished what was possible with the material at hand. One must adjust class instruction to the type of student who is a member of the class and although participation was not good, I still learned a lot. We covered form, style and substance of writing and read one novel. We also read selected essays by many different men in order to compare them, at least mentally. Best, of course, we wrote a lot. Only through practice can we improve. It has become easier for me to write already. I was a bit disappointed that the class did not participate more. Perhaps they might have been obliged to do so by more severe methods. I also wish that my essays had been more specifically criticized as to style and form more than content and that you would have given higher marks as incentive to "keep up the good work.

But the last commentary, while it is negative, is refreshing:

> Every Tuesday and Thursday evening I spend an hour and fifteen minutes in a dingy dirty trailer attending my Freshman English class. Sometimes the session is invigorating, and I then feel I've learned a bit more knowledge. Other times, however, the class drags unbearably slow, and I feel faint with relief upon reaching the fresh campus air.

Here I derive fiendish pleasure, for these are the times when I refuse to return a ball that I have served. Moreover, the change of pace sometimes makes a tombstone face so responsive that it yawns. With this we have completed our emphasis upon the impromptu comments of students. God bless them all.

Let us now turn our attention to the very important relationship of student motivation to the grading system. The majority of students informally questioned about the merit of the pass-fail system felt that it tended to decrease their incentive to work as hard as they would have if a "grade" had been forthcoming. Surprisingly, the more able students resented the new concept most. However, one student who was among the most able defended the system as an ideal that was impractical in terms of human nature. She said "it would be a fine idea--if students did not value grades more highly than a feeling of having learned." Still others opposed the system because "there is no way to tell the difference between a "C" student and an "A" student.

To offset this negativism I emphasized the ideal that knowledge is its own reward. Moreover, my appeal was to the aesthetic enjoyment of using the imaginative and logical faculties to create new understanding between oneself and a reader. How successful was my appeal? Let the students reply in these excerpts from Letters to me, The Editor and final "projects."

Sample (1) From One Who Felt "faint from relief"

Dear Miss Sloss,

> Very few things upset my temperament, but the carelessness exhibited by pedestrians while crossing the street at night really annoys and frightens me.
>
> This carelessness is particularly noticeable now during the holiday shopping season. Last night as I drove cautiously down Broadway no fewer than three dozen darkly-clad pedestrians leisurely joy-walked in front of my car. I am not normally a nervous person; however, I was certainly not calm when I finally arrived home. My heart was thumping wildly, and my head was spinning with visions of wrecked cars and mangled bodies.

Dear Ed.

> What's happening down at the tribune? Not much eh. Well there's not much happening here either. Oh, incidentally, I'm writing this letter from a hospital bed.
>
> I've let my gripe go as long as possible so when I ended up here, I thought it would be a good time to write.
>
> Although your newspaper on the "hole" is adequate, I find one item most misleading. I use the term misleading out of sheer politeness; actually its an outright lie. This item appears daily on the front page--you don't even attempt to hide it.
>
> Let me first say, since I started this letter on the wrong foot, that there are areas of your newsprint which are fairly accurate; your index for example is O.K. However, the thing I'm concerned about is the individual who does your weather forcasting. I would use the term meteorologist but my spelling isn't too good. Actually its his fault I'm where I am. Let me explain.
>
> From January 3rd to the 28th he predicted snow, (what else in January) and the weather is sunny, so on the 29th he tells me its going to be sunny, smart man eh. What happens--it rains, and I get soaked and end up in the hospital without Blue Cross.

The thing that has me stumped is whether this nut is stationed here in Buffalo or in Miami Beach.

It is not my intention to belittle the man so I will close.

Enclosed please find my hospital bill; I don't have Blue Cross--remember.

STOP THE WORLD, WE NEED TO GET OFF! (A Final Paper)

It would be advantageous if we would be able to view the situation of the world completely objectively. It would be wonderful to remove ourselves to another planet and take a good look at the world as it stands today--to alienate ourselves. After we had transported ourselves it would be only fair to ask ourselves, as foreign beings, if we would want to visit a planet such as Earth?

In this other planet, we would have a very potent telescope, through which we are able to look down at the Earth. We could look through the streets of poverty stricken areas, and imagine what we could do to change the situation there....

A closer look would show us the young men of the world dying in wars caused by us. We could even tune into a debate between high world officials attempting to solve the problems we are already looking at.

For a more personal look, we could focus our attention in a home. We could look at a seemingly normal home where children are being taught to u e the word hate fluently. Oh! while we are looking let us not forget to wipe the hot and sorrowful tears from our eyes.

Liberty, Justice And Equality For All Men
Black and White

Yes, America has failed to provide liberty, justice and equality to all of her citizens. She has lain dormant and allowed hatred and suppression to replace the pursuit of happiness. Certainly, not all men are destined to achieve happiness; but all men must be permitted to strive toward this goal...

The conditions through which today's Negroes are struggling are intensified replicas of the ones their grandfathers lived with after the Civil War...

But more important than the deprivation of basic material needs is the Negro's struggle to be recognized as an equal man in society --not a man to be merely tolerated.

Questions exist in all of us who are desirous of learning. Questions can be defined as the framework while answers incase and complete the educational structure. Some people pass through life, accepting the happenings and surroundings without challenging "WHY" or "HOW."

...Perhaps our educational systems should be arranged so the teacher does nothing but ask questions of the pupils. This would necessitate the pupils looking for or compiling information to answer the assigned questions.

Sometimes the mind is so full of questions that it is forced to search or even ramble for the proper context to contain those inquiries. That is what I have tried to make happen in Explorations in writing. I have submitted abundant samples of student writing because actions cannot be told; instead, it must be shown. Perfection, as you can see, has not been achieved. Sometimes, like a sonnet of Donne, we have gone backward in order to go forward, but progress has been our most important product.

Miscellaneous Conclusions

1. Group work is the pairing of one's wit.
2. The pass-fail system reduces the students' initiative.
3. Good writing is a function of the individual's psychological set or condition at a given moment as well as the mastery of rules and logic.
4. The writing class should be a workshop in which both student and teacher search for the best context for ideas.
5. The turning points of my class were:
   A. the introduction of a textbook that reinforced the students need for a traditional (seeming) approach.
   B. assignments requiring observations of people, nature, and art.
   C. impromptu in-class drills.
   D. the reading of a novel.
   E. the reading of poems projected on the blackboard.
   F. and the writing of "modest proposals" inspired by Swift.
6. The creative student must not be treated with inflexibility, for often originality is incompatible with fixed rules. But when students initially restricted to the essay form are allowed to write a short story, that short story will stress a "single effect."

MFC "Fast" — Allen De Loach

MFC 101 sec. D 4. A good place to begin. I began. First to eliminate any intimidation the students might feel. So I presented the structure of the course to the students. A basic seminar. With me as moderator. All of the students were to discuss the course content on an informal but mature plane. Say what the hell you think. But think what the hell you say. OK. So the course was a 20th c. Lit. course with formal college composition in the background. The comp. was done on an individual basis, with the moderator helping individuals, not the group. A comp. once a week. Pages from 3 to 5. Until the last month and a half. The comp. had improved to such a high degree that only two comps. were necessary. These were directed toward the content and its comprehension. Course content. 20th c. Lit. But with a decided emphasis on the use of LANGUAGE AND INTENTIONALITY. Pound was a struggle. Eliot they relaxed with. Highly controversial. Lots of heated debates. Religion and Science always a good subject. LANGUAGE. INTENTIONALITY. The moderator never commits himself to a viewpoint. No right or wrong as far as the moderator is concerned. He should NOT attempt to convince the world that he is right and knows "the" answer. WCW was fun. Good old country Doc Williams. And they began to "learn" poetry. LANGUAGE. INTENTIONALITY. And Olson. and Creeley. He knows what he knows/feels. SO do we if we think of it - about is outside. LANGUAGE. Class time from 8:25-9:40. Class never left/finished talking until TEN O'CLOCK. One might they stayed untill 11:30 - didn't want (the class) to leave the debate hanging. Did it work? Was it successful? For me - very. For the class - only they know. I guess, yes. Else why do I have over half the class returning for the second semester. No one way to read a poem. A) is the authors eyes. B) is your initial intuition of the poem. Maintain B. Move to A and coincide with A. Maintain B and A. See the spectrum between. See Jane run. Run Jane run. The students got to a point where they no longer needed a moderator. They were guiding themselves. Knew when they strayed. The arrowhead. Goes where the archer shoots the arrow knows the stem will follow before the feathers.

The pass/fail system is the pass/fail system. As a moderator my concern was with the students learning. Not grading his or her or its learning. Who are you to judge how much a person learns. Or what level of competence he maintains. Well, I'm me. So I judge relatively. The pass/fail system is better then letter grades because the student molded by our bullshit-competition-rather-than-learn-for-learning-sake-academic-society eliminates intimidation and competition. They begin to learn and enjoy it. Go back to See Jane run. Run Jane run. LANGUAGE. INTENTIONALITY. The students like it. Most. Why not? What does it/or should matter to them what mark is placed on paper. If they learn, they learn. No machine placed letter grade is going to change they head problems. A staff couldn't do what I wanted to do. So no staff did it. I think language it worked as per the original intentions.

The aim of a freshman English course is to develop in the student a level of articulation that will enable him to satisfactorily meet the demands of his subsequent college courses. There are, no doubt, certain therapeutic benefits to be gained by the student who acquires in the process a new capacity for self-expression or who "broadens his horizons" because of this initial contact with something called literature. Although these possibilities make for glowing course descriptions, the mundane fact remains that freshman English should result primarily in more readable term papers for some future history, philosophy, or economics instructor. So apparently modest an ambition, however, does not necessarily imply that its achievement is the purely mechanical process of memorizing the rules of grammar and punctuation or the meanings of polysyllabic words that become part of an artificial vocabulary.

Section E-3 of the Millard Fillmore Freshman English program was, in fact, based on the premise that this is emphatically not the way to develop an improved, or even minimal, level of articulation. Instead, this course attempted to approach the problem with a three-part process:

1) Create an atmosphere that encourages the student to state his ideas and opinions.
2) Provide some content or stimulus for the production of ideas and opinions.
3) Cultivate the student's abilities by pointing out his strengths and weaknesses, and noting his progress. In the best of all possible worlds, such a program, applied for a semester, would inevitably produce, if not great writers, at least significantly improved writers. In the world of freshman English however, even such seemingly simple ideals as the creation of an atmosphere conducive to writing are open to a variety of interpretations, and individual students react and progress in individual manners so that the final success or failure of any attempt is never uniformly reflected by an entire class.

In the effort to create such an atmosphere, for example, the instructor stressed the fact that a pass-fail grading system minimizes the threat usually associated with the writing of compositions when quality points hang in the balance. The emphasis of the course was shifted from the student's ability to punctuate correctly to his ability to express an idea in writing with the directness he would normally have in speaking. Finally, students were given some voice in planning the specific details of the course through written suggestions or classroom discussion. While these tactics did achieve the intended result, there were some drawbacks. Several students, whose performance easily warranted a passing grade, indicated that the difference between an "A" or "B" would perhaps have motivated them to put forth greater effort. Significantly the poorer students voiced no objection to the grading system. A number of students interpreted the stated concern with directness and coherence as an excuse for careless spelling and grammar mistakes--a habit which, it seemed, could only be corrected by reverting to the opposite extreme of weighing such faults heavily.

In order to provide content for classroom discussion as well as a departure point for individual writing assignments, students were confronted with a variety of experiences, most of them manufactured by the instructor. In addition to viewing both a commercial film (In the Heat of the Night) and one of the English department's foreign film selection (Veridiana), they listened to Bob Dylan's recordings and read John Barth's The Floating Opera. No text (other than the novel) was used and reading material was provided by mimeographed hand-outs ranging from the (all-too-ambitious) "Myth of Sisyphus" to selections from e.e. cummings to Dylan Thomas. Writing assignments grew out of the classroom discussions engendered by these readings (or viewings), although students were given freedom to write on whatever aspect of the work at hand they chose. To vary the assignments they were frequently given the option of writing about some part of their personal experience--with the result that many students who had seemed to be poor writers because they were uncomfortable in the areas of literature or art, demonstrated a great deal of competence. The final assignment was

lengthy and required that the students read a novel selected from a list provided by the instructor, and perhaps a few articles tracked down through Reader's Guide, and then write about some aspect of this novel using the classroom discussion of The Floating Opera as a guide. The writing ability in these papers, however, and not the demonstration of a talent for literary criticism, was the basis for evaluation. It is, of course, needless to say that the reading, listening, or viewing assignments described here were somewhat foreign to the older men and women who comprise a Millard Fillmore class, and consequently, the written assignments often became vehicles for the expression of resentment, shock, or disgust--a condition which provided interesting reading for the instructor while it provoked the students to write with directness and purpose.

When the class' interest in literature showed signs of flagging, personal experience was made the topic for a number of assignments; the products of these efforts were then read aloud, discussed and evaluated in small classroom groups. Writing about experience proved a valuable tool in acquainting students with the fact that written English is not a foreign language. Many students, whose poor writing had resulted from the unsuccessful attempt to use some artificial and formal style, showed marked improvements; others produced a number of quite well written short stories. When given the choice of experience or literature as their final long writing assignment, a significant majority chose to discuss a novel and many, though not all, the students seemed able to apply the techniques they had acquired in writing about experience to the more formal composition.

Written comments on papers, classroom discussions and individual conferences provided the means of evaluating the student's work and channelling his efforts in productive directions. Of these, individual conferences proved the most effective, since class discussions tended to become generalized and theoretical, and written comments, if lengthy enough to be really effective, were both time-consuming and frequently misunderstood or ignored by the student.

In general, the three-part plan worked well enough to be used again with the second semester class after a few changes have been incorporated. Some exercises in grammar, for example, will probably be assigned, if only to those specific students who seem to be having difficulty. The individual conferences, instead of occurring outside class time, will be included as a regular feature by designating one class period every week or two a "workshop" session, during which time students can be observed and guided while in the process of writing themes. Finally, grades will be given on individual themes in addition to the written comments in order that the student might be made aware of the calibre of his work at the same time that he learns which portions of it are best. This is intended primarily for those students who, although in danger of failing, might be given a false sense of security by written comments which emphasize only positive aspects of their work. With these inclusions, the course should prove flexible enough to cope with the wide variety of backgrounds and abilities found in a single class.

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MFC "Fast" — Kevin Kelly

Since the primary focus was to be on writing I thought it important that the students find some topic which they felt significant enough to communicate. I used two basic approaches. I attempted to convince them that their own experiences were important enough to be shared. The other approach was to have them read sections in The Borzoi College Reader hoping they might find something provocative enough to make them want to write about it. I allowed the greatest possible latitude in their writing and in their classroom responses to encourage each student to develop his own particular talents and interests. Each student was required to turn in five pages of writing each week in addition to a final piece of writing ten pages in length.

In the classroom discussion students would read their papers and the other members of the class would be invited to respond to the paper. In each instance

I would choose papers which I felt focused on some particular writing problem. As the group began to cohere they seemed to implicitly agree not to criticize one another. Fortunately the class was small enough to enable me to confer outside the classroom with each student at least once. The first conference was mandatory and subsequent conferences were left to the initiative of the student. In certain cases I requested more than one meeting. In these conferences the student was less hesitant to ask what he might have considered, in the classroom, to be a 'dumb question'. I was able to consider the student's individual problems more closely. I believe that these m eetings were the most profitable part of the entire course.

I had emphasized at the beginning of the course that every student who completed all assignments would pass. I had hoped to relieve some of their anxiety over final grades in order to allow them to focus their energies on their work. In most cases this approach was helpful; some few students took advantage of the situation and put less than minimal effort into their work.

Some students reacted negatively to the pass/fail system, but after a classroom discussion on the significance of A,B,C etc. most agreed that grades in Freshman English are not as meaningful as they had supposed. As the semester progressed and the students received feedback through written commentary and individual meetings they seemed to agree that this feedback was more important than a letter grade. I personally feel that when students are given letter grades they tend to ignore the instructor's comments which accompany the grade.

I did not work with a group. I felt that I would be more effective following my own system and using my own style. If I found something was not working out I felt free to make changes. I have had a few years of teaching experience and, in the process picked up some ideosyncratic approaches which work well for me but perhaps would not work for others. On the other hand, I know many of the Freshmen English Instructors and we have had many casual discussions about mutual problems and individual approaches.

There is one problem with MFC students which I feel could be solved if a test on English Usage were given before they are allowed to register for English 101. Some MFC students cannot handle the language on the most rudimentary level. The former system involving Fundamentals of English was not any more effective in coping with the problem. Former students who took the Fundamentals course told me they felt it was not helpful. They could not cope with both the Fundamentals course and English 101 at the same time.

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MFC "Fast" James Garcia

The basic idea behind the course that I taught last semester was simply to expose the students to the works of selected writers in the hope, frankly, that some mysterious osmotic miracle would come to pass, that the intake would effect the output, that, in short, their own creative efforts would be the better for the reading list. The works were selected, as you can see from the attached sheet, for their tendency to focus in on one individual, to analyze him, pick him apart, exposing motives, drives and what have you to the reader. It was designed to be a kind of crash program to readjust and sharpen the students' vision, using for glasses relatively traditional material.

The class plan was simple, as again you can see from the attached schedule (not exactly followed, but covered): in-class work was to center as much as possible around the assigned fiction, moving to student material only when a crisis was sufficiently widespread to warrant it. The majority of discussion was in-the-round, with students doing as much of the talking as possible, breaking in on each other with refreshing abandon. I lectured as infrequently as I thought possible, but tried to give each author his due. Concerning the homework, topics alternated between being of the students' choices and of my own. No grades were used; I merely commented as extensively as energy permitted throughout and at the end of each paper. Though I had not planned it, a mid-term exam seemed necessary, with the understanding that those who failed it would become eligible to take a final. Three of the twenty-seven took a final. All the students passed, deservedly, in my opinion, the course.

It became evident before we were too far along in the course that ten substantial pieces of fiction were entirely too much to take in a semester, especially in view of the fact that the students were not familiar with any of the material at all. Rather than cut the number, though, I decided it would be best to plod through, just touching major points of each. The main concern was that they had read the book. This semester I am doing five pieces.

During the last month of the course, instead of the one 500-word piece a week, a short story was planned. Length was assigned at 10-15 pages, though many turned out to be much longer. The idea was that after eight or nine short pieces were done, a longer piece would not seem totally impossible. This pretty much covers the history of the course.

Now, results: I was happy to see that their own work increased in quality, generally, thousandfold. As I'm sure is usual, some had it and some didn't and never got it either. However, if nothing else, almost 100% of them did become familiar with the form, lost their self-consciousness, and made attempts to rise above simple narrative and descriptive mish-mosh and put themselves into the psyche of the person written about. One assigned topic--description of a rape with male students taking point of view of the female and v.v.--produced intricacies of plot, infirmities of mind, and minutia of detail that were, in fact, refreshing to see from students whose initial attempts encompassed all the daring inherent in such titles as "Why I attend MFC" and "My Homelife: A Pastoral Epic." Generally, then, I thought the writing was worthwhile.

And I can't help but think that the novels we read for class were at least partially responsible. The detail and quivering honesty of Camus, Sartre and Genet as they tore into their "I"s, the experience of Freud's clinic, the freewheeling analysis of Kerouac, the brutality of West, and the beauty of Fitzgerald's despair--and the class' discussions of what made these protagonists tick--all seemed to clear the air of inconsequentials and make the class somewhat more eager to get into the fundamentals. There were problems: Sophocles was rather a mistake; some of the ladies wouldn't read Genet; the best of Joyce was beyond us all; attendance dropped sharply during the Freud meetings. But, perfection is only to be chased, never, thank God, caught.

The students themselves were usually talkative. I believe they liked the in-the-round informality. There were the usual nights of teeth-pulling and stone faces. There was the usual teacher's wrath and dismissed class. I was impressed, from the beginning, by the interest they showed; their motivation couldn't be higher. It was, for me, coming myself from a no-cut system of enforced attendance and bored sleepy hungover students, a real surprise and for rather the first time in a long time I felt I had an occasion on my hands I had to rise to.

An experiment of sorts: In the Hardy anthology, which I highly recommend for both its stories and its all-too-few critical notes, there is Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily." Another section, meeting at the same time and taught by Miss Clare Silverman, was also doing that story, from a different anthology. We juggled dates so we would be doing the story at the same time, and arranged a debate. The format was interesting. Preceeding the debate, both classes discussed the story separately for a session or two. Then, Miss Silverman and I arranged two lists of questions. I would ask her class questions to w ich my class already "knew" the "answers," and she would do the same with mine. The results were amazing: the class ran to 8:30 and the discussion was the best of the year. It was so satisfactory that both classes joined forces again later in the year for a Christmas party of sorts.

My students, after initial shock, reacted quite benignly to the new pass-fail system. I think they believe there's really little they can do about it either way, and I can't blame them.

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MFC "Slow"

Donald J. Reidell

The following information concerns my report of English 101 in Millard Fillmore College. I found that the majority of my students had great difficulty in the planning and the organization of their writing. Therefore, I decided to make no assumptions that they knew anything about writing. This gave me the opportunity to start from "scratch" with them. The students felt very much at ease with this approach because then their progress throughout the semester could be more validly judged.

Most of their written assignments were based upon either their personal experiences or their personal opinions, attitudes, emotions, etc. I felt that by doing this, the students would at least have the knowledge and the content for their writings. The organization and the clarity of this content were then the main points with which I was concerned. My intention then was to use a building process, to move at the students' rates of progress. I would like to add here that this method worked quite satisfactorily for both the students and me. After writing a few papers, they showed more self-confidence and were even eager to write another paper in order to see what they could do.

Whenever I noticed that there were a lot of students making basically the same kind of error, then the core of the lesson was concentrated upon that error in the hope that that writing problem would be alleviated or possibly eliminated. I found that after using this technique, the error rarely occurred again. The students' writings slowly began to improve, and by the semester's end I was happy to note that when the students made the effort their writing achieved a satisfactory quality. Some students improved faster than others, but all but one or two did recognizably improve.

Some time in class was spent in analyzing separate papers. The students would scrutinize them, offer suggestions for improvement, and, in some cases, ask their fellow classmates for a re-writing of the paper, following the constructive criticisms made in class. I feel that this procedure achieved not only interest in their classmates' writings, but more important, it allowed them to recognize the weak points they themselves may have. This allowed them to make corrections in their own writing, or, at least, make them aware of these errors.

It may appear that from what is stated above, that we as a class were concerned only with the errors that may occur in writing. This is not the case. Much time was spent in reading and analyzing good and excellent writing samples for the purpose of understanding why they were good. The samples used were from some of the students' papers as well as from professional writers. This gave the students variety. By using good examples of their own writing, I felt that the class gained a sense of confidence and appreciation. They knew that good writing was within their grasp if they would only devote the effort.

In order to further clarify and elaborate upon what we were doing in class, a text was used. I chose <u>From Paragraph to Essay</u> by Ohlsen and Hammond. This text, in my opinion, gives a logical movement in compositional development.

The following outline essentially covers the procedures used during the course. The students' writing assignments were aligned to this outline.

I. The Paragraph
   a) Unity
   b) Coherence
   c) Emphasis
   d) Adequate Development

II. The Theme

In numbers I and II, unity, coherence, emphasis, and adequate development were taught first in the sentence, then in the paragraph, and finally in the theme.

III. The Varieties of Development
   A. a) Combining Sentences
      b) Transitional words and phrases
      c) Sentence variety
   B. Developing thoughts
      a) Enumeration in the sentence, in the paragraph, in the theme.
      b) Circumstances in the sentence, in the paragraph, in the theme.

IV. Forms of Discourse
   A. Exposition
      a) Identification
      b) Definition
      c) Classification
      d) Illustration
      e) Comparison and Contrast
      f) Analysis
   B. Argument
      a) Evidence
      b) Reasoning
      c) Persuasion
   C. Description
      a) Dominant impression
      b) Texture and Pattern
   D. Narration
      a) Time
      b) Measuring
      c) Pattern
      d) Proportion
      e) Point of View

Grading Assessment - I felt that the new grading system worked quite well. It is true that the students had to acclimate themselves to this new procedure, but once this was done, they accepted it as being very effective. There are at least two reasons why I thought that the S or F symbols were especially good for Freshman English.

First, the student was aware of the fact that he should be constantly improving in his writing from paper to paper. I did not place an S or an F (U) grade on the papers because I felt that the student might then fall into one of two possible situations. If he received an S on a series of papers, he may become a bit overconfident and smug, thus easing up on his effort, If he received an F (U) on a series of papers, he may become disillusioned and just give up. Therefore, I made pertinent comments on each paper, pointing out the major deficiencies--those that should be worked on and eliminated by the next paper. However, as you had suggested, I made a point of first capitalizing upon the good points. These were emphasized so that the student would carry these qualities from paper to paper. I felt that the student could strive toward improvement better by grading and marking this way. The students themselves were quite satisfied with this approach.

Another advantage of this procedure of grading is that it gives the initially weak writer a greater opportunity to improve. If the A,B,C,D,F system were used, he may have to receive a D or F for his papers, and possibly receive one at the semester's end. But in the present system, if he improved from what he did at the course's outset, he received an S, and this gave him an opportunity to go on to the second semester and gain further experience without being penalized with a low grade. Quite obviously, the better writer was not affected this way.

Conversely, it can be argued that the better writer may suffer by receiving the S grade because he may have received an A or a B. But because the grades in Freshman English are not averaged into the cumulative point average, this argument isn't too valid.

Therefore, in summary, I would certainly like to see the present practice continued.

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James J. Moran

MFC "Slow"

The outline below represents my plan for the past semester. I emphasized writing techniques and subject matter related to good writing and writing improvement throughout the course.

I. Categories of Writing
   - A. Exposition
   - B. Description
   - C. Narration

II. Explanation of a Process

III. Imagery--Figures of Speech
   - A. Simile
   - B. Metaphor
   - C. Personification
   - D. Hyperbole

IV. Transitional Words and Phrases

V. Paragraph Development
   - A. Enumeration of Details
   - B. Example and Illustration
   - C. Comparison and Contrast

VI. Punctuation

VII. The Cliche' - Words and Phrases

VIII. Grammar and Style

IX. The Paragraph Outline

X. The Analytical Sentence Outline

XI. Over-Generalizing

XII. Point of View

XIII. Character Development

XIV. Parallel Structure

XV. The Passive Voice

XVI. The Rhythms of Speech - Sentences
   - A. Basic Statement
   - B. The Strung-along Sentence
   - C. The Periodic Sentence
   - D. Combinations

XVII. Allusion

XVIII. Irony and Satire

I feel that the great amount of writing and the explanation of so many phases of writing provided (1) many insights (2) a recognition of what good writing means and (3) the opportunity to attempt to use the techniques above in a specific way.

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MFC "Slow" I. Leonard Halpert

Here, briefly, is a report on my 101 section last semester and on my reactions to the new grading system.

I believe I had a successful semester, with most of my students showing significant improvement. Since I have always stressed writing in my 101-102 sections, I did not have to make many changes to adjust to the new approach--an approach that I agree is well suited to the needs of the typical beginning evening student. It is admittedly more difficult to sustain student interest in a course dealing solely with composition than in one dealing also with literature; but there is no question that these students, many of whom have had no writing experience for many years and some of whom start with no real grasp of even basic sentence structure and paragraph organization, need and can profit from all the work in writing that they can get.

I organized my course on the conventional premise that students can best improve their writing by (1) writing and (2) reading and analyzing good writing. For textbooks I assigned Elements of Style, to which I keyed specific errors in student papers, and a collection of essays that served both as models of good prose and as subject matter for student papers. When individual students exhibited special problems in the fundamentals of grammar and rhetoric, I assigned them appropriate readings and written exercises in a college English handbook.

I divided class time about equally between (1) analysis of essays in the textbook and discussion of general problems in composition (finding material, limiting subjects, developing paragraphs, thinking logically, perfecting sentence style, etc.) and (2) discussion of student themes, with emphasis on successes as well as failures. By having students provide as much as possible of the classroom commentary, I sought to demonstrate that the "rules" of good prose are not something externally imposed by instructors and textbooks but are inherent in the process of effective communication. (I am following roughly the same procedure in the current semester, except that I am using as textbooks A Rhetoric Case Book, which offers the student considerable help in organizing and developing his themes, and the Harbrace College Handbook, an excellent self-teacher from which even the best students can benefit.)

II.

I prefer the old grading system. The simple S or F option, in my judgment, is too blunt an instrument to meet the needs of either the instructor or the student. I believe that many students require the incentive of high grades to put forth their best effort, and that an Incomplete offers a practical solution to the problem posed by the occasional lazy student who is careless about meeting the requirements of the course.

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MFC "Slow" John M. Phelps

The primary emphasis in this course was placed upon improvement of student writing. The group was a "slow" one, so an effort was made to review some of the basic elements of writing, primarily expository writing. At each class session, some particular aspect of writing was presented and papers for that week were examined with special attention being given to the aspect of writing that had been emphasized in class. Papers were written out of class and in-class instruction involved the use of the overhead projector and transparencies dealing with such items as "the topic sentence," "paragraph development," "transitional devices," "internal punctuation," and the like. In some cases, transparencies were made of the students' own pieces of writing to demonstrate errors in writing as well as good aspects of student writing.

Toward the latter part of the semester, the text From Paragraph to Essay, by Woodrow Ohlsen and Frank Hammond, was employed as a kind of frame of reference, and student papers stemmed from selections read. The readings in this text are designed to assist progress in writing.

Following the suggestions given at out Fall meeting, the instructor did not grade papers. Each paper was returned to the students with notations indicating strengths, weaknesses, etc.

In the opinion of the instructor, the course was well-received by the students. They developed genuine interest in writing the papers and the comments evaluating the papers. In my opinion, there seemed to be a definite improvement in the writing of almost all of the students and almost all of them seemed to develop a sincere concern for the manner in which they wrote their papers.

The instructor was available for individual consultation for twenty minutes before each class and for whatever time was required after the formal class session. Many of the students took advantage of this opportunity to discuss their own papers individually.

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MFC "Slow"

Douglas Roycraft

The new Freshman English program proved to be an interesting experiment for me during the fall semester. The first evening of class I explained the new regulations to the class and was amazed by their strong reactions to this shift in policy. The students that were assigned to me were, in most cases, second semester students, and they were primarily concerned as to whether they would be given credit for their first semester. After completely explaining their former and present status, they seemed reasonably satisfied.

The rating S and F did not appear precise enough for me to work with during the semester. I always wrote lengthy comments on their papers following their work, praising good points about the paper and citing areas where improvement could be made. It was my intention to try not to discourage them at any time but to do all that seemed possible to give them incentives to proceed beyond the level from which they were working. But students asked me to use the traditional marking system during the semester so that they could know what their papers would be legitimately worth if this course had maintained the traditional marking system. I, therefore, continued to grade the papers even though the students knew that their ultimate grade was to be S or F. Students, in general, felt that there was a debate as to whether D, cited as unsatisfactory, was to be F under the new system. I defined F as non-passing and indicated that D is outside that area. D is thus equivalent to S, even though it is a borderline case.

Students felt that the change in grading was a reflection of the changes taking place in contemporary education and seemed to accept the fact philosophically, if not enthusiastically. Many students believe that the whole undergraduate program would be eventually turning to this system and that their current English program was a foreshadowing of that eventuality.

The most difficult problem that I had with my classes was to instill in the students' minds the value of striving for excellence. Their work did not initially indicate that they were concerned with their best output. Why should we, they argued, put extra effort into work when no recognition of excellence is to be officially recognized? Most of my students were slow, however, so I could effectively warn them that failure to do one's best could very easily lead to failure. I believe that the teachers who have the faster students in the evening program, the teaching fellows, have the greatest challenge. They must arouse their students to go beyond a passing mediocrity so as to achieve the level of excellence which is expected of them.

The grouping of students that was made at the end of the first week reflected so many various standards of student placement as to make it a game in student exchange rather than a meaningful step toward homogenious grouping. For some teachers, students with serious writing difficulties were a primary consideration; for others, students were accepted or rejected for numerous factors. The result of this grouping seemed negligible, and although I did not find any outstanding students in my group--I rarely have during the past five years--I did find students ranging from good to bad.

No reading program is specifically urged for the new program. Yet I believe that reading and writing are strongly linked, that one learns to write more effectively by comparing his writing with effective writers. I also believe that having effective and interesting reading before a class enables a student to find more exciting and provocative assignments. I worked on the assumption that the more interested a student becomes in his work, the more likely he will be to do his best work. A first assignment was from Paul Goodman's "Growing Up Absurd." The students felt strongly toward most of the issues that Goodman considers in his book. The papers that they wrote for me showed this concern and, I think, produced some of their best writing. It was by arousing their interest in this way that I sought to offset the pass or fail image. My ability, of course, to create an intensity of interest was not always as successful as I would have liked, but when the occasions were there I believe the setting was right for producing their best work.

I also selected F. Scott Fitzgerald's short novel, "The Great Gatsby," and we discussed not only the concepts of the novel from a philosophical point of view but also from that of style. Studying the way the author described scenes encouraged students to attempt a similar kind of work and we experimented along these lines with some success. Words became for them more than just a tool to convey general attitudes; students attempted specific observations and adopted new techniques which added color to their work. We became aware of figures of speech, as well as other writing techniques, which enables a writer to more effectively convey his subject to the reader.

During the last weeks in the course, I had the class read some avant garde work, such as Edward Albee's short plays, "The American Dream" and "The Zoo Story." The end of the term, I think, is the most difficult time to sustain student interest. Albee's attempts to shatter complacency, and "to claw," as he says, "our way into compassion" aroused my students, bringing about interesting class discussions and papers which showed that Albee had had a strong impact upon them.

Students were pleased that there were few in-class papers. The lack of concentration upon factual detail in preference for freedom to develop in writing skills gave them satisfaction since they felt that they were devoting their attention to the most important concern. The view of a paper per session was less pleasing. In order to avoid creating the image of factory output, I allowed for some flexibility and sought to receive as many papers from them as they could effectively produce, usually no less than one a week. At times, I had students read their work to the class. In situations such as this, all the students were seated in a circle. They seemed to be more comfortable in this setting and better able to volunteer their views.

I believe that the new Freshman English program demands much more from the teacher than was the case with the old program. If one fails to personally motivate his students, for example, the grading system will not be there to urge the student on. By the same token, of course, the over-concentration upon grades is gone. Yet the attitude can be that if you do the minimum amount of work to pass, you will be just as far ahead as the one who does the maximum amount. The new program affords, in any case, new experimentation and practical concentrations upon writing. I was pleased to work with this program this past fall and am now trying to incorporate those techniques which worked last semester with new alternatives which I have developed as a result of the first semester's experiment.

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